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DECEMBER 1987

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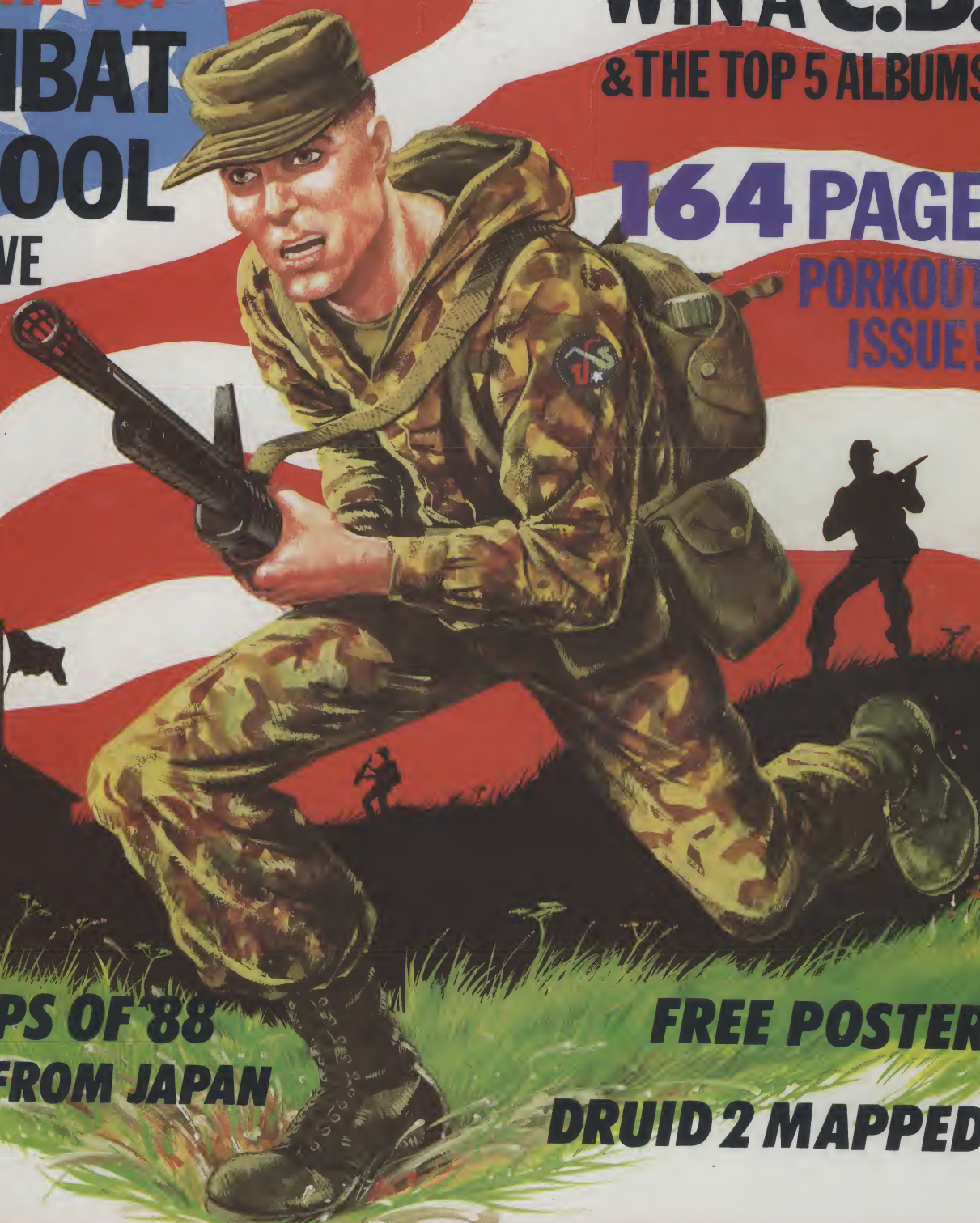
**OVER THE TOP
COMBAT
SCHOOL**

**EXCLUSIVE
REVIEW**

**WIN A C.D.
& THE TOP 5 ALBUMS**

164 PAGE

**PORKOUT
ISSUE!**



**COIN-OPS OF '88
REPORT FROM JAPAN**

**FREE POSTER
DRUID 2 MAPPED**

**REVIEWED: STAR WARS • P.H.M. PEGASUS • RYGAR
• SKATE OR DIE • COSMIC CAUSWAY • GARRISON**

*You're cool, the engine's hot, the girl's gorgeous,
a tank full of gas and an open road.... the rest is up to you!*

Screenshot from Amstrad version.



TM

Out Run

Screenshot from CBM 64/128 version.



Screenshot from Spectrum version.



Screenshot from Atari ST version.

START



The ultimate experience in motor sports simulation, the absolute challenge to nerve and reflexes. Feel the wind in your hair and the pull of the G-force as you power your way along the highways and byeways, a girl by your side, and open country before you. Experience the exhilaration and excitement of driving a high performance sports car in this teasing time trial where your co-ordination and nerve will be tested to unbelievable limits. Out Run the coin op starred as an arcade sensation. Out Run the computer simulation mirrors this exciting all action spectacle.

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SPECTRUM

CASSETTE £8.99

AMSTRAD

CASSETTE £9.99 DISK £14.99

ATARI ST

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INCLUDES ORIGINAL
'Sound Track'
FROM COIN OP
VERSION

The machine becomes a home computer reality on December 10th.*

*Atari ST version will be available later in December.



SEGA



U.S. Gold Ltd., Units 2/3 Holford Way, Holford,

Birmingham B6 7AX. Tel: 021 356 3388.

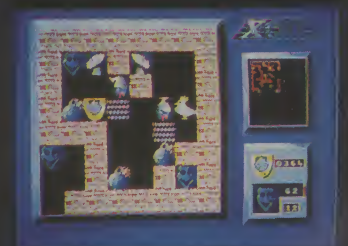
The Ultimate Maze Challenge

There are no random events in **XOR**'s labyrinthine palace and there is no premium on hand-eye coordination. You have all the time in the world to work out the precise nature of the hazards you encounter. Logical thinking, strategy and tactical problem solving are all part of the **XOR** experience. And **XOR** is not simply about finding solutions. If you can solve the entire puzzle (15 levels plus an encrypted anagram), you qualify to be a member of the **ORDER of XOR**, with a certificate and a badge to prove it.

"...this is one of the most compulsive, cunning and attractive programs I've seen for some time! the game is superb - a very classy original twist on the basic maze theme" A+B Computing (as reviewed on a BBC micro)

XOR's Features

- 15 graded mindbending mazes
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- High resolution quality graphics
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- Intriguing logical problems
- Interactive dynamic puzzles



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DECEMBER

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Free Kick



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It's taken a long time. Three years to be precise. But now that it's happen it makes all the waiting seem more than worthwhile. I refer of course to the sudden rush of excellent Amiga games. You will notice more and more Amiga games in CU — they are just too good to ignore. This month we bring you the first reviews of *Western Games* and *Garrison*. I believe that the quality of these games speaks for themselves and ends the debate over what is the better machine the ST or the Amiga. CU will not be sitting on the 16 bit fence, we will be supporting the Amiga as we feel this is clearly the best machine. But don't let all this talk of Amigas give you the impression that 64 owners are going to lose out in any way. We have stacks in store for you including another two great free gifts on the front cover of Jan and Feb's issues. You are holding the best value in gamesdom — 163 pages plus a 24 page supplement for a pound. I ask you does any other magazine come close?

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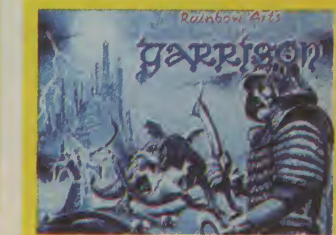
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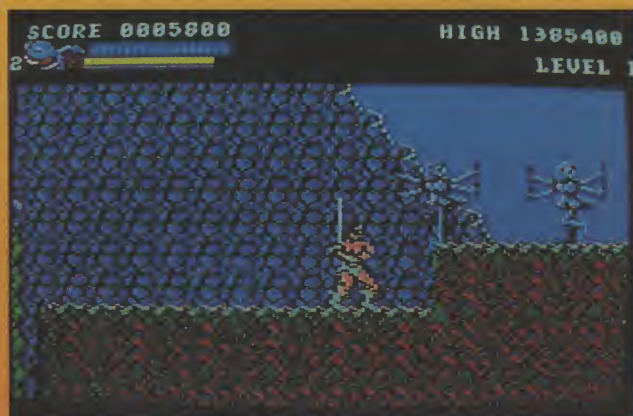
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BUZZ



RASTAN SAGA

PHWTHWAACCCCKKKK! Is it the Big Ed finally losing the last of his marbles and dropping his typewriter from the fifteenth-floor of his luxury penthouse window? Or Mike Pattenden exacting swift and terrible retribution from an unfortunate contributor who's just split his last infinitive? No, it's *Rastan Saga* cutting a swathe through the forest of naff software which will be cluttering up the shop shelves over the coming weeks. When we had the coin-op in our office a month or two back it had to be locked away to keep the staff off it. The Ocean conversion of this brilliant sword-fighting game should be hitting the streets before Christmas, so don't say we didn't warn you.



OUT RUN

Here it comes! The most hyped drivealong of all time! The conversion of the millenium! Yes, it's *Out Run*, screeching to a halt outside your local softshop just in time for the Spend, Spend, Spend season. No, you won't be getting a seven foot-long hydraulic console, but the original's hippy-dippy soundtrack will be included in the package on a separate audio tape for you to play on your stereo while cruisin' along in your automobile. Converted from the year's most popular coin-op and benefitting from all the publicity and column inches that software giants US Gold can generate, *Out Run* has to be the surest tip for Christmas No1 there's been for yonks. The tills start ringing on December 10th.

RAMPAGE

Phew! After all those press releases full of bumpf about superaquamarine megawacko jets, fiendish plots to take over the world using germ bombs and everything you never wanted to know about the internal combustion engine, its quite a relief to be able to write about an unpretentious, simple-minded game. In *Rampage*, you play a monster who, for absolutely no reason whatsoever, decides to demolish entire cities building by building, and has no objection to eating a few soldiers while he's at it. There are even a couple of other monsters who can be challenged and beaten to a pulp. Yes, this Activision conversion of the arcade classic will appeal to anybody who's partial to the occasional hefty dollop of utterly mindless violence and destruction.



JACK THE RIPPER

In 1888 there was a series of grisly murders in the Whitechapel area of London. All the victims were prostitutes and all were disfigured in a manner that suggested that the killer had had professional experience of using surgical implements. Rumours as to the identity of the murderer were numerous — one held that "Jack" was in fact in some way connected to the Royal Family — but the crimes were never solved. Now, on the centenary of the atrocities CRL are releasing *Jack The Ripper*, programmed by a mysterious duo of women known collectively as St Brides, in which you play a wrongly accused suspect who sets out searching for clues as to the identity of the true killer in order to clear his name. The graphics are, as you can see, suitably grisly, and no doubt CRL, fresh from their success at having *Frankenstein* X-rated by the Censorship Board, will be attempting to achieve the same money-earning notoriety with this bloodcurdling little program.



MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE

"Masters of the Universe?" We hear you cry incredulously, "surely that's ages old, why we seem to remember a CU front cover on it way back in February. . . " No, no, you fools, not the hoary old US Gold game based on the TV series of the comic of the toys but Gremlin's brand spanking newie based on the forthcoming *Masters of The Universe Film* due out just before Christmas. Shrewdly timed to coincide with its silver screen counterpart's arrival, *MOTU* finds you, He-Man, and your faithful friends Gwildor, Teela and Man-At-Arms attempting to find the eight pieces that make up the Cosmic Key. You'll have to take on certain dangerous missions to get some of the pieces, but there's no alternative: only with the full key can you get to challenge the supreme nasty Skeletor, and only when he's been vanquished will the gentle Sorceress of Greyskull Castle be released, thereby enabling everybody to live happily ever after.

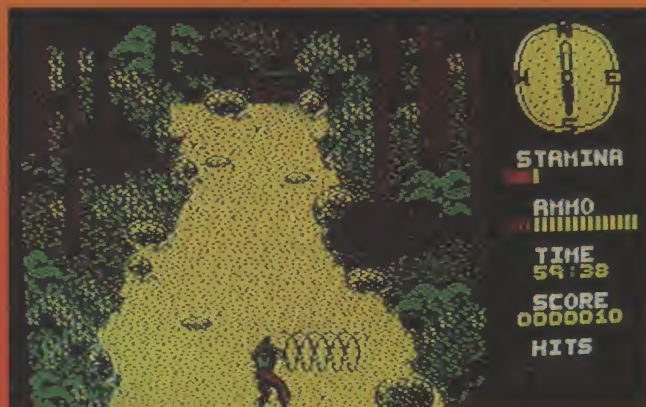
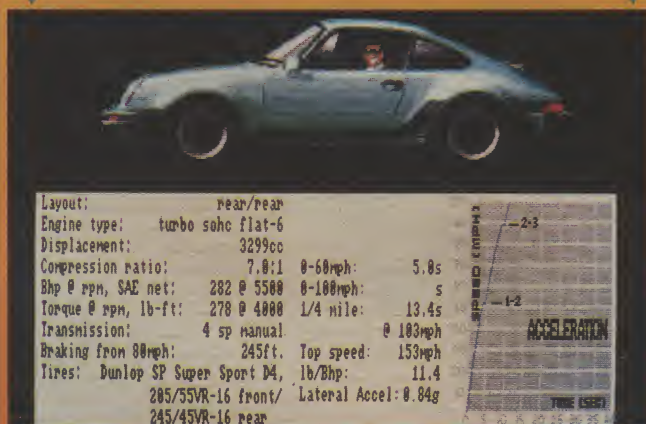


MARS COPS

It's 2029, and you are a Mars Cop, one of the crack team whose primary duty is to protect the growing colony of scientists and engineers on the Red Planet. Of late hostile alien spaceships have been getting a little too close for comfort and now you've been ordered into your trusty starfighter to chase and destroy these pesky extraterrestrial intruders. You must pursue the enemy one at a time, and your armaments will have to be very carefully used if your mission is to be successful. Although you've got a lazer which can be used to blast the meteorites that come between you and your prey, it won't destroy the aliens themselves, but merely temporarily stun them. Nope, what you've got to use in order to dis them greenies is one deadly rocket. Waste, it, and your foe escapes. Either way, you'll still have to make your way home, through hazardous dust storms and various other natural obstacles to be found in the region. *Mars Cops*, by Arcana Software for the Amiga, is due for release any minute now.

TEST DRIVE

Life is not fair. There you are, probably the most suave sophisticated and impossibly sexy young person in the civilised world. But who gets to drive the neighbourhood's only Ferrari Testarossa? Nigel Montmorency-Dingbatt, the ageing and utterly charmless chartered accountant, that's who, while you, owing to the small matter of having to survive on thirteen pence a week, are condemned to the squalor and indignity of the number 47 bus. But grieve no more! For those egalitarian-minded folk at Electronics Arts have decided that *everybody* should be able to experience the thrill of driving a really swish motor (well, everybody who owns a 64 or an Amiga anyway). *Test Drive* is a sim which slings you into the luxurious seats of such fab machines as the Testarossa and the Lamborghini Countach, negotiating sections of road within both the given time limit and the Road Traffic Acts. So now maybe you won't have to start the revolution after all. . .

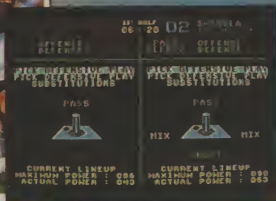
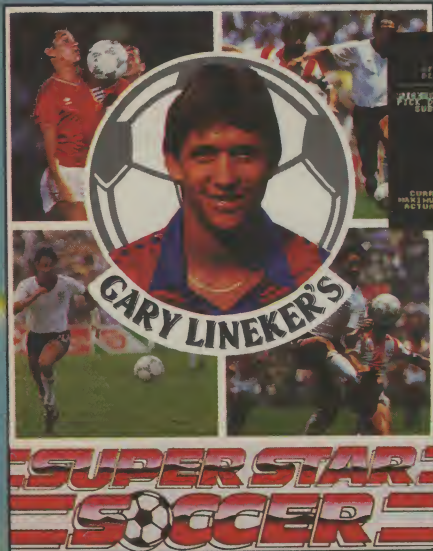


PLATOON

Based on the harrowing and critically-acclaimed movie about the realities of war in Vietnam for soldiers in the field, Ocean's *Platoon* promises to be more than yer common-or-garden blast-or-be-blasted. You are in control of a platoon of five men, working your way through a bewildering maze of jungle tracks and underground tunnels, searching hostile villages, bunkers and the oppressive tropical terrain. The object of your search is the renegade Sergeant Barnes, a former platoon member gone bad. Needless to say, you encounter a host of snipers and cunningly hidden guerrillas en route. Without quick reactions and a good sense of direction you're not going to make it through to the sixth level and your quarry. January will see *Platoon's* release on the 64.

BUZZ

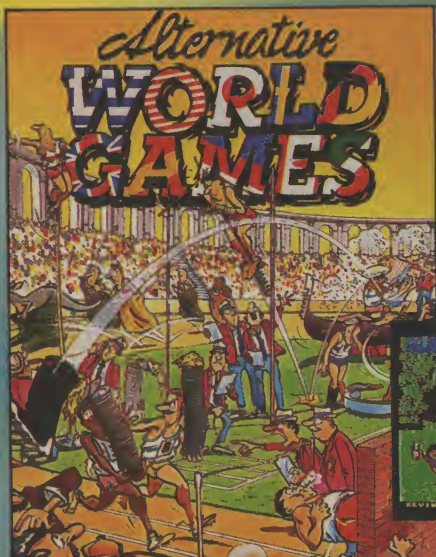
GET TO GRIPS WITH



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AMSTRAD
£9.99 C £14.99 D
SPECTRUM
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ATARI ST
£19.99



ALTERNATIVE WORLD GAMES

Why be serious when there's so much fun in taking an alternative view on things. Represent the country of your choice in such events as Sack Racing, Log Flogging, Running up wall's, Pole climbing and Boot Throwing. This ingenious but hilarious spoof will have you in stitches, not to mention Rivers, Sacks, Piles of sand.....come to think of it, it may get serious after all.



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IT'S A SHATTERING EX

A GREMLIN GAME!!

CBM 64/128
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AMSTRAD
£9.99 C £14.99 D

SPECTRUM
£7.99 C



COMPENDIUM

Wacky, Wacky, Wacky is the best way to describe this adaption of the traditional board games compendium.

Your hosts are the Winks, father Tidley Wink and his wife, Mavis Wink.

Up to four players can compete by taking the role of either one of the Wink children, the baby or the Wink dog.

Play Snakes and Ladders where real snakes wriggle across the board, or the pub game where a rather drunk Tidley Wink flips his beer glasses in the air for the rest of his long suffering family to catch!

Old favourites Ludo and Bingo are not forgotten in this hilarious game for one to four players.



BLOOD VALLEY

Archvile the hideous and mighty leader of the Firebrake has decreed that you must be hunted down like an animal and brought to sentence. Your only chance of survival is to escape the valley. Do you have the will and resourcefulness to succeed not only against your opponent but the creatures and evil beings of the fantasy world of Orb as well.

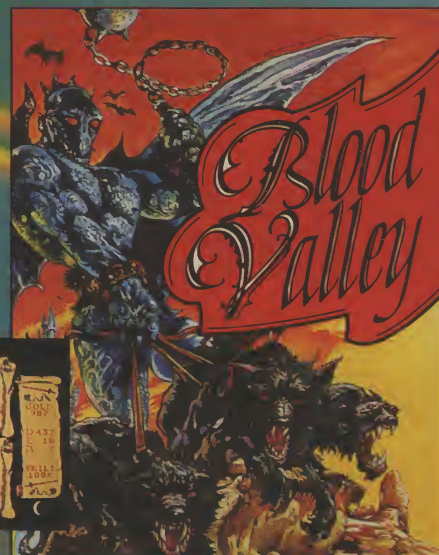
Based on the Duellmaster series of fantasy books by Mark Smith and Jamie Thompson, authors of The Way of the Tiger.

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AMSTRAD
£9.99 C £14.99 D

SPECTRUM
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PERIENCE

GREMLIN

BUZZ

Bono in computer game shock?

It can't be true! Surely the world's most famous Irishman hasn't interrupted his fab beat combo Yew Too's universe tour to star in a humble *computer game*??? No, we couldn't believe it either when we received Superior Software's release: "Bono", it began, "an enterprising little dragon, had opened a bath house for the monsters who lurk in the stagnant waters of the deepest parts of the sea." Well, we mean to say, that's not cricket! Imagine calling the world's most tremendously talented human being "an enterprising little dragon",

especially when he's taken time off from being one of the megafamous creators of "The Banyan Tree" or whatever it's called to appear in your new game. And what's this about him going everywhere with his faithful friend and ally, Fozzy?!!?? I mean, we know Adam's quite woolly and not so bright but he's quite easily distinguishable from the Muppet Show Bear! And what do you mean by calling the game "*Bonecruncher*"??? Is this supposed to be some kind of sick joke??? Well, scandalous, that's what we'd call it. . .oh?

What's that? It's not really anything to do with U2? And the fact that the main character is called Bono is merely a weird "coincidence"? But what are we going to do with this brand new copy of their spanking new "official" autobiography "The Unforgettable Fire" which has just fallen into our hands? (*Why don't you just give it to the first reader who can tell you Bono's*

real name and give the next five each a copy of the game and then maybe everybody'll stop prattling on about U2 around here and we can get some work done-Ed) Oh, Jolly good. Postcards please to *Unforgettable Compo*, Commodore User, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, to arrive no later than December 31st.



Deluxe paintings

Vermeer, due out on Reaktor any day now, is certainly rather different to most other 64 products you're likely to see in your pre-Christmas shopping



expeditions. Nope, there's no galactic warfare, hand-to-hand combat or martial arts here and it doesn't even seem to have so much as a sniff of a platform about it. *Vermeer*, you see, is chiefly concerned with the buying and selling of aged paintings. It seems that millionaire art magnate Sir Oliver Burroughs has had his entire, nearly-priceless collection pinched. The reason we say "nearly" is that your mission is, amongst other things, to buy back all the paintings in the collection — when you can find them, and more importantly, afford them. For poor old Burroughs,

stricken with grief, has stood down from the leadership of his corporation, and you compete with up to three other players to be the one to take it over. You achieve this by doing all sorts of daring international trading deals, thereby generating plenty of dosh which you then spend stocking up the depleted Burroughs gallery. Every so often you'll get a chance to buy back one of the stolen paintings which has come back on the market, but beware — there are plenty of forgeries out there and the wrong decision could cost you a lot of dosh, and the game. With dozens of deals, shady and otherwise, to be done, *Vermeer* should teach you a thing or two

about the world of high finance. And with lotsa genuine old masters to be learnt about and acquired, who says you don't get oodles of kultshure on your trusty 64?



Virgin buys into Mastertronic

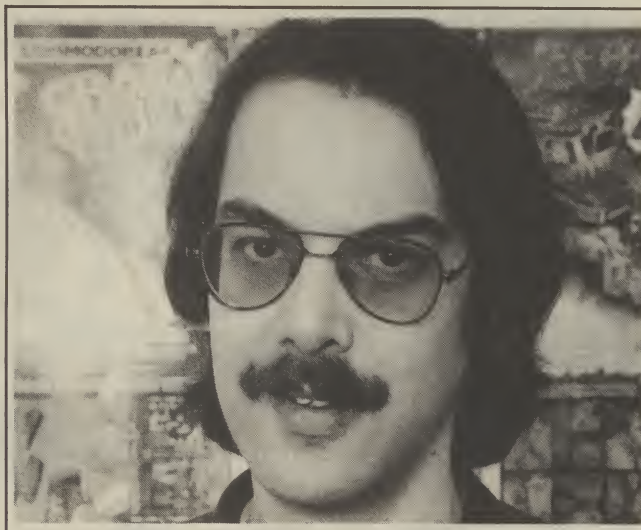
The software diversion of "Rich" Dicky Branson's empire has just announced their acquisition of 45% of top-selling budget software house Mastertronic. Apparently the shares were previously held by "sleeping shareholders".

"The decision was made to change that situation" explained Mastertronic's Jeff Heath, "and that shareholding has been taken up by Virgin. Virgin haven't taken us over or anything like that — the majority shareholders still control the company."

Nevertheless Virgin Publishing will now have two members on the board of directors including their Managing Director Nick Alexander, which will undoubtedly give them a great deal of influence over company decisions.

There are, according to Heath, no current plans to combine the output of Mastertronic and Virgin's own label, but Heath did allow that "obviously in the course of time we may be looking at things like duplication, distribution and printing."

BUZZ



Rob out — Martin?

Music programmers Rob Hubbard and Martin Galway are set to swap musical roles with Hubbard going in-house and Galway turning freelance. Hubbard looks set to be joining up with the Electronic Arts team full-time, thereby leaving a yawning gap in the market for really good freelance software tunesmiths. While refusing to confirm that a final deal had been struck, EA's Mark Lewis told Buzz that Hubbard and themselves were currently "negotiating towards establishing a long term relationship" with one another. Meanwhile Galway, nephew of Irish whistleman James and in-house music maker for Ocean Software, is set to leave the company. Wily Martin, perhaps

sensing that Rob might soon be vacating the prestigious centre-stage slot he's held for so long, has recently decided to go freelance, thereby leaving himself open to offers of work from desperate software houses looking for somebody to take Rob's place.

Martin is currently working on three different Ocean games — *Rastan Saga*, *Combat School* and *Gryzor* — which should keep him busy for some months to come, but with Electronic Arts likely to be keeping Rob jealously to themselves it looks like Martin may be finding himself very much in demand, which is good for him but could prove unlucky for his former employers.

BUZZ

Loricels launch: Top French software house Loricels have recently announced their intention to release their games in the UK, with distribution being handled by Elite. Their first product to hit Britain's shop shelves will be *Grand Prix 500cc*, a motor cycle racing game which should be available early next year.

Defender taped: Mirrorsoft have just released the Amiga and C64 hit *Defender Of The Crown* on tape. As the game originates in the US of A where everybody is lucky enough to own a disc drive, the initial release was only for disk, but Mirrorsoft have recently managed to cram this very large game onto two cassettes — no mean feat, they assure us — which will retail for the princely sum of £12.95.

Driller due: Incentive's much-hyped *Driller* looks set for release in January. This space-mission game features a new "solid three dimensional environment simulator" called *Freescape* which apparently provides amazing 3-D solid graphics, as opposed to the usual vector graphics with their "line drawing" effect. The game has eighteen sections which according to Incentive, can each allow for 20,000 billion screens. Phew!

T-Running: Also on the horizon for early 1988 is Nexus' *T-Runner* in which you play the intrepid Captain Skellery who, by some strange set of circumstances, finds himself being chased around a disused Deep Space Marines training course by fierce and virtually indestructible Rover Balls.

BUZZ

Halo Jones snapped up by Piranha

Piranha Software have just signed the licence to produce a game based on *The Ballad Of Halo Jones*, the fab comic strip by Allan Moore. *Halo Jones* is the second 2000AD character to be signed up by Piranha — their *Judge Death* game should be hitting the streets any day now. Quite how Moore's masterful creation will transfer to the screens of the nation's 64s is uncertain. *Halo Jones* is an unusual strip in that its main character is a woman — and even more unusual in that she's

neither a wimpy cutsie who giggles and faints her way through life, nor a Grace Jones eat-photon-death-sucker lookalike mutant. She's simply an ordinary young woman trapped in a huge artificial city called The Hoop somewhere in the dim and distant future, a place and time by turns brutal and dreary, horrifying and humdrum. *The Ballad Of Halo Jones* is the story of her day to day struggle to survive and her eternal desire to leave.



Courtesy of Gallup the Top Ten features a number of games recommended already in CU. The top slot goes to Impact from Audiogenic – an Arkanoid style game. This demonstrates Amiga owners hunger for good coin-ops to play on their wonder machine. And who can blame them – so far being starved on a diet of strategy and adventure.

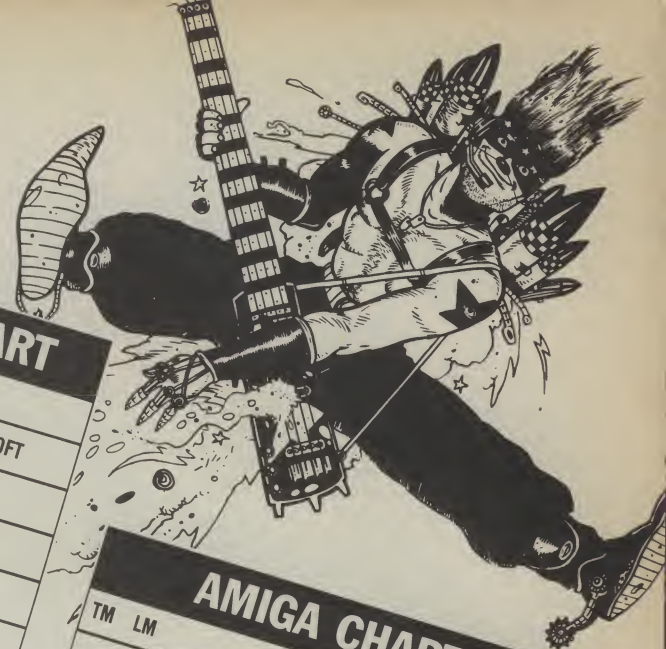
The 64 chart is again dominated by budget titles — with Firebird's Arcade Classics claiming the number one slot. Lets hope the game charts are not going the same way as the pop ones — with nostalgia rules being the watch word for all new releases. I mean a few games of Invaders for old time sake is all very well but just how far are the software boys going to take this? I don't fancy going back to those bat and ball games that you used to get free with your latest 22 inch from Redifusion.



TOP TEN 'NAM FILMS
APOCALYPSE NOW
THE DEERHUNTER
SOUTHERN COMFORT
TOTAL JACKET

- 1) APOCALYPSE NOW
- 2) THE DEERHUNTER
- 3) SOUTHERN COMFORT
- 4) FULL METAL JACKET
- 5) PLATOON
- 6) COMING HOME
- 7) HAMBURGER HILL
- 8) BAT 21
- 9) RAMBO
- 10) GREEN BERET

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ADVENTURE CHART

TM	LM	
1		DEFENDER OF THE CROWN MIRRORSOFT
2		GUILD OF THIEVES RAINBIRD
3		YES PRIME MINISTER MOSAIC
4		STAR WRECK ALTERNATIVE
5		ALTER EGO ACTIVISION
6		SHADOWS OF MORDOR MELBOURNE HOUSE
7		LEGACY OF THE ANCIENTS ELECTRONIC ARTS
8		FRANKENSTEIN CRL
9		NORD AND BERT INFOCOM
10		NOT A PENNY MORE DOMARK

AMIGA CHART

TM	LM	
1		NE IMPACT
2	3	TERRORPODS AUDIOGENIC
3	1	DEFENDER OF THE CROWN PSYGNOSIS
4	4	GUILD OF THIEVES RAINBIRD
5		NE STAR GLIDER RAINBIRD
6	10	BARBARIAN PSYGNOSIS
7		NE MOUSETRAP MICRO VALUE
8		NE PLUTOS MICRO VALUE
9		NE TEST DRIVE ACCOLADE
10		NE GOLDRUNNER MICRODEAL

C64 CHART

TM	LM	
1	1	ARCADE CLASSICS FIREBIRD
2		NE MICRO RHYTHM PLUS FIREBIRD
3	12	JOE BLADE PLAYERS
4	2	KIK START 2 MASTERTRONIC
5	3	RENEGADE IMAGINE
6	11	SOCCER BOSS ALTERNATIVE
7		NE INDIANA JONES US GOLD
8	4	WORLD CLASS LEADERBOARD ACCESS-US GOLD
9	10	BACK TO THE FUTURE FIREBIRD
10		NE BUBBLE BOBBLE FIREBIRD
11	16	INTERNATIONAL KARATE ENDURANCE
12	14	FOOTBALL MANAGER ADDICTIVE
13	9	CRICKET INTERNATIONAL ALTERNATIVE
14		NE SUPER SPRINT ELECTRIC DREAMS
15		NE ON FIELD FOOTBALL FIREBIRD
16		NE ON COURT TENNIS FIREBIRD
17		NE UCHI-MATA ALTERNATIVE
18	8	LAST NINJA SYSTEM 3
19		NE HEAD COACH ADDICTIVE
20		SUPER ROBIN HOOD CODE MASTERS

Readers Coin-op Chart

TM	LM	
1	1	OUTRUN
2	2	DOUBLE DRAGON
3	4	ROAD RUNNER
4	3	R-TYPE
5	5	BUBBLE BOBBLE

Get yer top fives in for next month ASAP. First five lucky devils out of the tri-coloured hat get this season's ultimate designer garment, a turbo-powered CU T-shirt. Top fives should be sent to Coin-op chart, Commodore User, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. And don't forget to tell us whether your chest size is puny, ample, or absolutely elephantine.

ARTS



PIRANHA

YOGI BEAR

Hey Hey Hey!

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TRAP THROUGH THE DOOR

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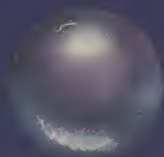
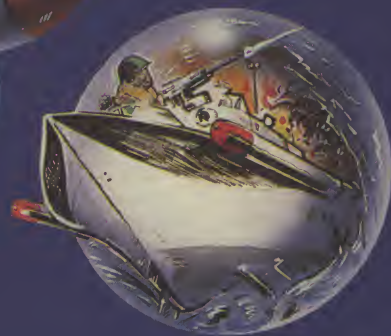
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RYGAR

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US Gold
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The inlay to *Rygar* is pretty abysmal stuff: "4.5 billion years have passed since the earth's creation. Many dominators have ruled in all their glory. But Time, their greatest enemy, ultimately defeated their reign. And now a new Dominator's reign begins..."

Yes, it's appalling guff, isn't it. Still, look on the bright side — you've only got to read this review once, whereas if you are unlucky enough to become the owner of a copy of *Rygar* you'll have to sit through the computer laboriously typing out this nonsense after each lost game before it'll consent to let you have another go.

No, *Rygar* certainly isn't a game to play or review with a hangover. It's a conversion of a pretty average coin-op in which you play some other-worldly hero who plods through life zapping everything that comes his way.

You start off with five lives, and a generous time limit on each level. The graphics are small and mean, rendering any positive identification



And wandering through the Weary Woods.

of your enemies impossible, but they seem to be a selection of hooded monks, hermit crabs, catherine wheels, warrior-bearing gryphons and translucent desert rats.

You've got to run or bounce through the scene zapping nasties (your weapon, whatever it is, only has a very short range so you don't get to kill them until they're at close quarters), jumping over obstacles and ravines, picking up extra icons which are left when you zap certain rocks (these give extra time or smart bomb everything on screen), crouching low to get the crawlers and leaping high to catch the airborne meanies.

The colour scheme, the lack of

graphic quality and the speed and smallness of the sprites all combine to make this a frustrating and difficult game to negotiate. Often you're not really sure why you've lost a life or at whose hands.

Even worse is the joystick control — whether or not you manage to make it over the ravines seems to be more or less a matter of luck, and I certainly wound up losing at least one or two of my lives per go when,

despite feverish jerking of the stick in vain attempts at lift-off, my character lazily descended into the pit in front of him.

At the end of each level you have a brief breather while your scores and time bonuses are totted up, then it's out once more into the next scene. The different levels aren't really all that different, with most of the obstacles and enemies repeated with minor variations.

When you lose your fifth and final life your onscreen character's body is plucked from the ground and carried off by what bears a passing resemblance to a winged lion. At least, most of the time: on the third level, however, I noticed that my corpse floated off of its own accord while at the other side of the screen the flying feline hovered, obviously wondering why his prey had left without him.

If *Rygar* sold for £1.99, it would be a poor piece of budget software by today's standards. To release it as a full-price top-of-the-range coin-op conversion is just a bad joke. If this is US Gold's idea of a strong pre-Christmas release, they'd better think again.

Nick Kelly

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

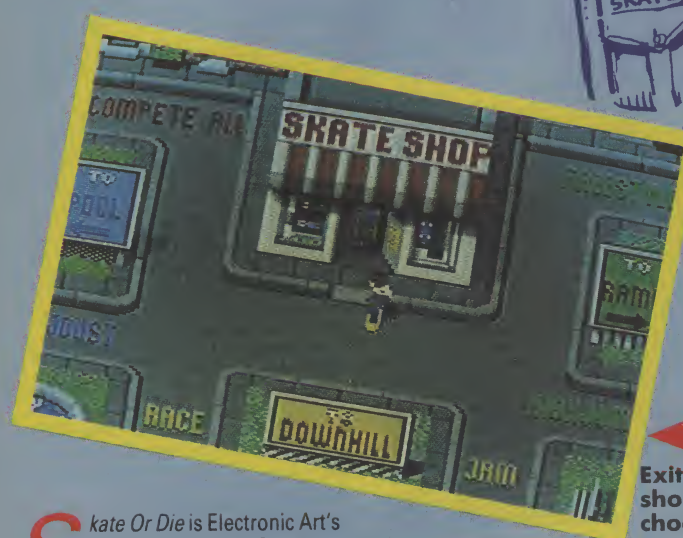
2
Overall



Electronic Arts
Price: £14.95/disk
£9.95/ cassette



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Exit Rodney's shop and choose an event.



Battered in a drained pool.

Skate Or Die is Electronic Art's contribution to the Great Skateboarding Revival (founder: M. Pattenden & Assocs.) and, with some reservations, it's a worthwhile addition to the small but growing number of skateboarding sims available.

There are five events to try your skills at, but first you've got to register with Rodney, the gruff and aged punk proprietor of the skateshop. Once you've entered your name in the registration form you get to choose from quite a wide range of board colours, then it's down to the most important choice — practice or compete.

The reason I say this is an important choice is that *SOD* has one very irritating feature: each event has a lengthy pause to be endured during loading. If you choose "compete", once you've finished an event you can't go

straight back to try it again without sitting about twiddling your thumbs for about three minutes (and I was playing with the disk version — what it'll be like for you unfortunate cassette-loaders I shudder to think).

So for maximum enjoyment, at least until you've become reasonably skilful at the game, go for "practice". Now you'll find yourself outside the Skateshop, with the different events represented, 720°-style, by different streets to be taken.

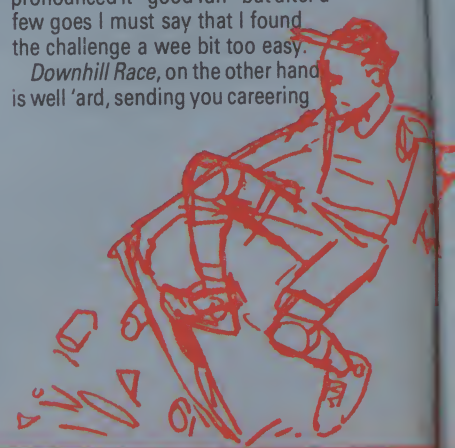
Freestyle is more or less the same as *California Games*' "half-pipe" event — you get points for various tricks attempted while barrelling around the inside of an enormous U-shaped bowl. There are two "Pump Zones" in the floor and pressing the trigger on your joystick while you're moving through these

enables you to attempt certain tricks. This event is really quite good crack, though you'll have to go through a considerable amount of trial-and-error if you want to be able to do every possible stunt without going through the tiresome process of reading the instructions (*lazy git* — Ed). Even after I'd read the instructions I found some of the more spectacular tricks still eluded me. "Try tweeking your aerials by clicking in mid-air" the instructions suggested (*Ooooh, sounds painful* — Ed) and I did, but to no avail.

After all that concentration and timing, *High Jump* was a birrova doddle. The idea here is to see how high in the air you can go above the top rim of the half-pipe. Simply waggle your joystick like a maniac to

gather impetus on your journey down from the opposite rim and see how you measure up against the graduated pole at the far side. Mad Mike P. had a shot at this and pronounced it "good fun" but after a few goes I must say that I found the challenge a wee bit too easy.

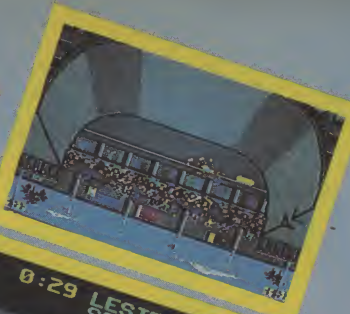
Downhill Race, on the other hand is well 'ard, sending you careering



down a country road racetrack, scattered with gravel, flags and even hurdles to be negotiated. You get a choice of control movements — "regular" (which involves pulling back on the joystick to move forward, and which I found near-impossible to use) and "goofy" (which, far from being as its name suggests, allows you to control the board in a most realistic and sensible way). You're racing against time here, and, believe me, you'll need your wits about you to get your bonus.



Splattered in the half-pipe Freestyle.



Watch out for the garbage chute.

Picked up by the law at the end of Downhill Jam.



So how high can you try?

And if you think *Downhill Race* is a toughie, just check out *Downhill Jam*, in which you take on a buddy — or a computer-supplied local toughie — in a real Tom-and-Jerry style race through a hazardous series of back alleys. This really isn't easy, especially as you're each allowed to try to kick and punch the other off his board, thereby gaining valuable seconds and ground. The *Jam* is also where the humour of *SOD* really comes into its own. In early events coming a cropper might be accompanied by a simultaneous falling off of your helmet and pads. But in this event you're a trendy and rather violent punk — no padding, no helmet — and when things go wrong, the results are far more unusual. There are manholes to be fallen down, walls to run into and bins to be tripped over — often

accompanied by the temporary loss of your fright-wig — but undoubtedly the best fate, or at least the funniest, is when you hit one of the two stretches of wire fence which hinder your progress: at first you seem to have passed straight through unscathed, but then, in a classic Hanna Barbara sequence, you fall to the floor in a heap of

dissected fragments! The winner is the first one to reach the squad car which awaits you at the end of the last alley — presumably to cart you both off to borstal.

Finally, in *Pool Joust* you take on either your mate or one of three local nasties in a fight on wheels in an empty swimming pool. There's two of you and just one "paddle" which changes hands every five passes. When you've got it, do your best to hit your opponent with it while it's flashing, when he's got it, avoid him as best you can. Manoeuvring around the pool isn't easy and, frankly, seems a rather hit-or-miss affair. The first player to get three falls wins — but like in tennis you have to win by at least two points so it's a ding-dong battle, it can continue for ever, or until you both get bored with this rather tedious event.



An overall reaction? Well, *Skate Or Die* is a "quality product", as we in CU Towers say: The graphics are good, the music's fine and the movement is well up to the very high standards necessary in games of this type. That said, it does seem to fall down a bit on some of its events — neither *High Jump* nor *Pool Joust* would have seen the light of day if I'd been programmer — and the aforementioned loading pauses are an irritant. And while *SOD* does make an attempt at being as sassy and street-smart as the real thing, it's only on the *Downhill Jam* that it really succeeds in raising a laugh as well as a sweat. In my opinion the best "event" games rely almost as much on quirkiness and humour as gameplay for their appeal and in this respect *Skate Or Die*, despite a brave effort doesn't quite cut it.

All in all then, a good sim and well worth a look — but we're holding out for 720° for some real thrills.

Nick Kelly

Graphics
Sound
Toughness
Endurance
Value



7
Overall

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COMBAT

64/128
Ocean
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Gimme some, gimme some PT, PT — that's what I need. And that's what *Combat School* gives you. A hefty dose of military disservice and *Decathlon* joystick waggling.

If 1987 is remembered for anything it will be for 'Namism. It

was the year film producers rediscovered Vietnam war movies, right down to the soundtrack from one, 'Full Metal Jacket', becoming a hit record. Ocean, with typical guile, have ripped the tune off and struck it on the front of this conversion. Still everyone's stealing records these days.

If you've seen 'Full Metal Jacket' then you'll know what to expect in *Combat School*, because the Konami game is based on just that kind of gruelling physical preparation. The object is to qualify as a captain and go on to tackle a dangerous mission. Before you get that far you'll have to undergo a rigorous course of training to prepare you for battle. This takes the

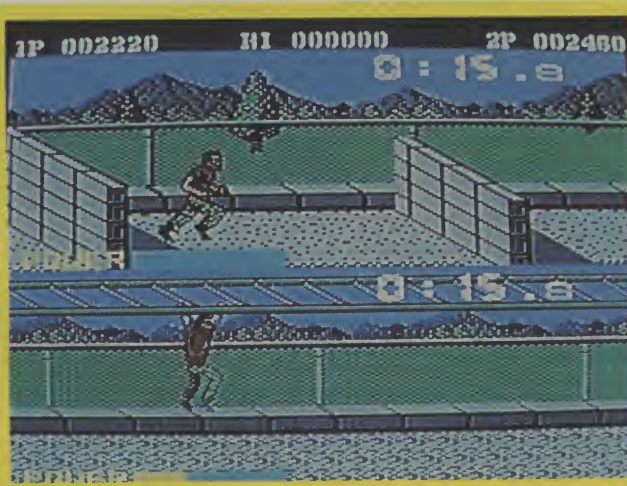
form of seven lung-bursting, sweat-inducing, back-breaking events. Stand by your joysticks!

The game kicks off with the **Assault Course**. In true 'Krypton Factor' style you're expected to complete it before the time runs out. You get a split screen here enabling you to play against an opponent or the computer in a straight race. The course consists of a series of walls, some low enough to hurdle, others which have to be scrambled over. To finish the course you have to swing across a set of bars and leg it across the line. That entails thirty seconds of joystick waggling and hitting the fire button to clear the walls. This is no wrist buster though, and after a few goes I was giving the computer a head start.

Graphically the assault course is probably the best looking event in the whole game. The animation is slick and realistic, the backgrounds detailed and colourful.

Successfully completing the course will take you on to the first of the three **Shooting Events**. This is a machine gun test with your man lying prone and taking out a series of targets, thirty-five in all as they rise up randomly from a field. This is the event in the coin op where you get the tracker ball whizzing around so that the machine gun rakes through the targets. You can't do that here unless you have an autofire switch on your joystick. Instead you have to press fire on each one which can be a bit of a tricky business when you're trying to get the

▼ **The assault course — don't slam the wall.**



▼ **Gimme six pull-ups you lousy soldier.**



SCHOOL



crosshair to scroll nicely through the targets.

When you do hit the targets they shatter realistically which makes up for the otherwise disappointing graphics on this section. Your machine gunner looks a bit like a stick insect, but I can live with that.

It's worth mentioning here that if you fail you go right back to the beginning, but if you only just miss out you get a chance to redeem yourself by doing several strenuous pull-ups in a set time. This entails some fairly furious stick waggling, but there again it serves you right for being a nancy boy.

Event three is the **Iron Man Race**, another sort of assault course. Again you're up against the clock as you leg it, waggling the stick forwards this time, through a terrain covered in rocks and mines. Make it through these without falling arse over collarstud and you have a fast-flowing river to negotiate. There's a canoe in the middle which you can clamber into to up your speed, but logs float downstream and if you don't avoid them you'll be tipped out again. One mistake here and you can run out of time.

The Iron Man test has to be the worst of the seven events graphically. There doesn't seem to have been much attention to detail and the terrain looks flat and messy. It's an easy event really as long as you don't fall, nevertheless I have to say it's my least favourite. The background graphics look as if the programmer spilt his coffee down

the back of the computer here.

If you negotiate the Iron Man course you get another dose of **shooting**. This time it's strictly a duck shoot with the targets easily picked off. This time however, you have to hit fifty targets in thirty seconds which doesn't leave much leeway if you miss a couple.

Should you get the "you made it!" message you go on to the **arm wrestling** an event which defeats me. That's not because I can't do it, it doesn't matter whether you win or lose at this piece of senseless waggling because you always go through to the final shooting stage. However don't take a breather here because you can get a much needed



▲ Arm wrestling.

time bonus for the next stage.

The third and final firing range takes you back to **target shooting** in

▼ The final firing range — don't hit the silhouettes.



▼ The first firing range — you need thirty hits.



the field. This time however you can't blaze away wildly. The targets which pop up are always in the same spot but they are interspersed with red marine silhouettes which indicate that one isn't to be shot. That means you have to think before you fire, a problem that's made worse by the sticky joystick movement here which won't allow

**C.U.
Screen
Star**





originally thought this up they must have just seen the scene in 'Officer and a Gentleman' when Richard Gere punches it out with the sergeant. This scene is pure beat 'em up with you having to subdue the instructor within a set time limit. You have kicks and punches as per normal, but this guy is mean and experienced and will give you a really tough time of it.

Graduating gives you the chance at the **Mission** that concludes *Combat School*. This is a top secret assignment to rescue a hostage from an American Embassy. The instructions won't tell you much about the job you have to do, but they entail using all the skills you've acquired in training including the shooting, jumping and hand-to-hand combat. You won't need your arm wrestling skills here, soldier.

That's *Combat School*, a possible ten different tests of skill and stamina that make it great value for any arcade gamer. Konami's game proved a surprise flop after the way it was so well received critically which made it look as if Ocean had rushed in for a duff licence. However as a conversion it's just what companies should be looking at. Nothing here overstretches the computer and whilst the graphics in one or two places could have been improved the gameplay is varied and absorbing. I'd have liked to see some of the nice touches from the coin-op included like the odd line of speech or at least the message "Go home to your mother!"

Nevertheless this is a classy job and bears the unmistakable stamp of Dave Collier on it. Forget *Out Run* this is *the* game for Christmas.

Mike Pattenden



▲ Pick off the flying prams.

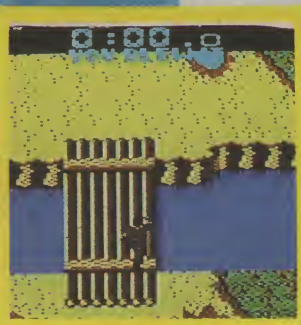
▼ The Iron Man test but are your boots made of lead?

up completely and you lose your chance that round.

The firing range is one of the toughest events here and one that frequently trips me up. You need lightning quick reactions and the only way I can ever pass is by way of a lot of chin-ups for getting close.

The final test is the fight with the drill instructor. When Konami

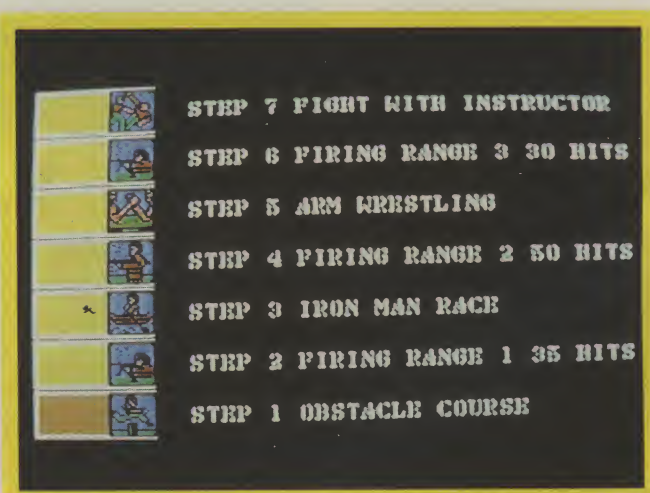
you to scroll the gun through the targets as before. This time you have to switch the crosshair through each one which makes it very difficult to get from one side to the other before they all drop down again. To make matters worse if you hit the wrong target the stick locks



C.U.
Screen
Star

10 THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT THE US MARINES

- 1) They were created in 1775
- 2) At their height in WWII the force numbered 450,000
- 3) In 1946 after demobilisation there were less than 100,000
- 4) The commander of the Marines is a 4-star general
- 5) Black soldiers were only allowed to join in 1942
- 6) The marines are classed as 'amphibious support troops'
- 7) They are in fact a wing of the navy
- 8) Marines are big and ugly
- 9) Never tell a marine this to his face
- 10) Er, that's it



Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

8
Overall

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COMBAT COMPO



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Question 1. The US Marines fought and won a major battle against the Japanese in World War II. Was it at (a) Iwo Jima (b) Hawaii or (c) Midway.

Question 2. What is the motto of the US Marine corps?

Question 3. In Vietnam the average age of a US Marine was (a) 19 (b) 20 or (c) 21?

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Screenshots taken from various computer formats



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elite



Bouncin' off blue...

Cosmic Causeway

Regular readers (are there any other kind?) will know that I think *Trailblazer* was and is the best thing since spring onion flavour Hula Hoops. *Cosmic Causeway* is *Trailblazer II*, but right now I can't think of a packet of crisps that comes close, (what about *Tortillia chips*? Ed).

If you've never heard of, or seen, *Trailblazer* here's the run-down: Imagine first of all a formula one racing sim like *Pole Position*, but instead of running through tunnels, cities and forests the road is suspended in space. The cosmic causeway is not like any ordinary road. For one thing you don't drive along it in a car. You bounce along it with a chequered red and white ball. The road is full of holes. Not the kind you find on the M1 either. Disappear down these ones and you don't reappear for a good three or four seconds.



Holes are not the only disaster areas, *Cosmic Causeway* has no less than eight colour coded squares some of which it pays to land on, others to be avoided at all costs. Red squares for example slow you down to a snail's pace. As the object of the game is to reach the end of each section before running out of time it's as well to steer clear of the red squares. Keep out of the way of purple ones too, unless you want to go down the causeway backwards that is. Purple squares are a nightmare, if you're really unlucky you can end up hopping backwards for miles from one purple square to another. Equally

unpleasant are the cyan squares which reverse the left/right on your joystick — makes you feel sick.

It's not all bad news though. You can bounce over a lot of this nastiness just by pressing the fire button, but your timing will have to



be good. Furthermore there are several kinds of square which will actually help you on your way. Green squares speed you up, though inevitably this just brings the encroaching doom that bit faster. Best of all are the blue squares which send you on a giant bounce enabling you to avoid all the nastiness below.



So, you get the picture. The ball goes flying down the causeway, bouncing when you press the fire buttons and going backwards, up, down, quick, slow or whatever depending on which squares you hit. You've got to reach the end of the section before the clock runs out on you. There are 24 levels and 6 sections in each level. At the end of each section remaining time is added to your score as a bonus. There the similarity with *Trailblazer* ends and the real fun starts.

Trailblazer was a two player game

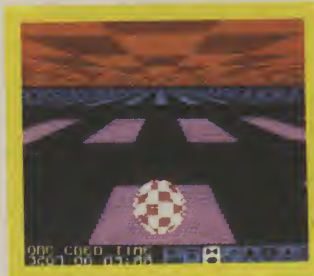


**Gremlin
Graphics
Commodore
64/128
Price:**



● **Screen Scene**

and you could play a section whenever you fancied. These options have been sacrificed in *Cosmic Causeway*, but what's in their place more than makes up for them. The major difference is the appearance of a shimmering white disk on each section. If you manage to collide with a white disk you are awarded between one and three credits which you can spend on icon features. There are eight icons altogether which appear at the beginning of each section. Providing you have enough credits you can buy any of the icon features which increase in price according to their usefulness and last for one level



Landin' on pink...



Aimin' for amber...



Phew! Makes you think.

only. Icon features range from the relatively cheap score "X3" at two credits to the expensive, but brilliant "roll over holes" (indispensable) and "clock retarder" at seven creds.

Another exciting departure from *Trailblazer* is the inclusion of the fire breathing dragon on the last section of each level. The dragon looks remarkably like a truncated version of the monster from *Space Harrier* and must be destroyed before you can reach the end of the level. Other new monsters and obstacles have



been introduced including aliens, trees, boulders and walls. You can fire on the aliens, dodge the trees and boulders like a maniac downhill skier. The walls are a different problem. You could try going through the doors, but it's a risky business. I reckon the way to do it is go for the "Turbo icon" feature — a snip at five creds — and go so fast you simply smash right through them. Sounds good doesn't it? Yet to be tried in practice though. Those discs are bloody difficult to get hold of.

What else? The sound is absolutely wonderful, turn the music off and turn the volume up full. Spend the whole of Christmas playing it. Stop only for food, sleep and any alcohol offered by drunken relatives.

Ken McMahon

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

9
Overall

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Screenshots from arcade version



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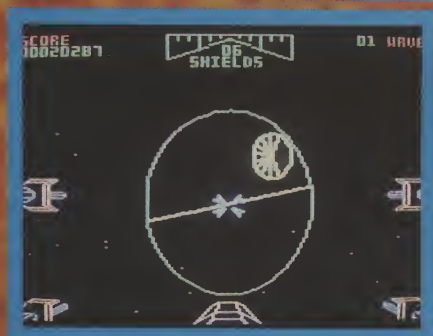
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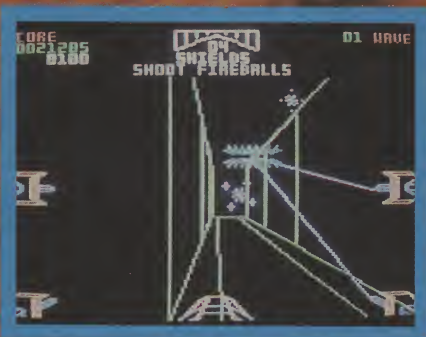


STAR WARS

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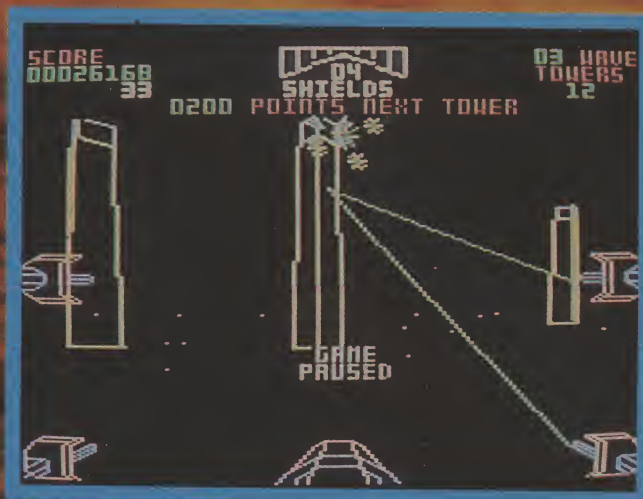
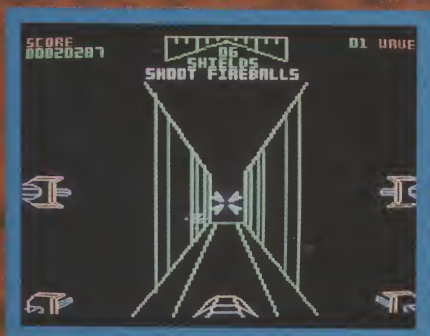
Deep in the Dark Star.



Tie fighters to repulse.

Climb into Luke's skyboots.

Save the universe.



Defence towers to thrash.

I'm feeling decidedly apathetic this chilly evening, so I dearly hope none of you are going to tell me you didn't see George Lucas's money-making, record-breaking Sci-Fi epic. . . Oh. There's always one, isn't there! Well, for the sake of YOU, I'll explain. Our hero Luke Skywalker was roped in to saving the universe by an old Jedi knight (an ancient band of warriors guided by the 'force' dedicated to do-gooding) called Ben Kenobi. Saving the universe (a popular task in computer games) is in this instance achieved by destroying a huge space station called The Death Star. The Death Star is the HQ of the evil empire, led by the equally evil Darth Vader (who incidentally turns out to be Luke's father in the sequel, but that's another story. . .) Anyway as the MESA members probably guessed, your objective is to take the role of Luke and do just as well as Mark Hammill did in the motion picture.

Star Wars is not only a movie conversion, but also an arcade conversion. A hugely successful arcade game it was too. *Star Wars*, despite being three years old is still fairly popular now, and still can be found in the arcades. It still attracts a 'cult' following who can make one game last several hours.

Star Wars is a vector graphic shoot 'em up, and as far as I can tell it was the inspiration for many of the vector shoot 'em ups on the 64 today like *Starglider*, *Deathscape* etc. Anyway, despite its wonderful and cultural background is it worth paying the sort of money for this game that could buy a front row seat for the long-awaited Hoddle and Waddle tour?

There are three levels of difficulty in *Star Wars* the harder the one chosen the bigger the bonus. The first stage of the game is set en route to the Death Star, in deep space. The empire's infamous tie fighters swirl all round you and must kill all these off before you progress on to level two. But don't be gullible enough to think that they just lie still like sitting ducks. Oh no, they're armed all right, you must blast the fireballs they fire at you, or your shield will be depleted. Nine hits and you're history, Luke!

The second stage (which is non-existent on 'easy' level) is set on the surface of the Death Star. You must fly along the surface taking out all the defence towers as you go. The way to do this is to shoot them directly on the top causing their circuits to go haywire. The towers also fire at you. Oh and don't bump in to them or your shield will go down. Hard life being a Jedi, huh?

Stage three is pretty tough too. You've made it into a trench, deep, deep, into the surface of the Death Star. If you can make it to the end, you will see a small hole which is the only way to destroy the Death Star. Shoot this and it will cause a chain reaction, causing the Death Star to explode in to eight million oven chip sized fragments. Hurrah!

Star Wars is an excellent game in the arcades but not I'm afraid on the 64. Not really the fault of the programmers though. Vector graphics have never worked as well on the Commodore as they have on other bigger machines. They just don't carry quite the same bright clout.

Ferdy Hamilton

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

5
Overall

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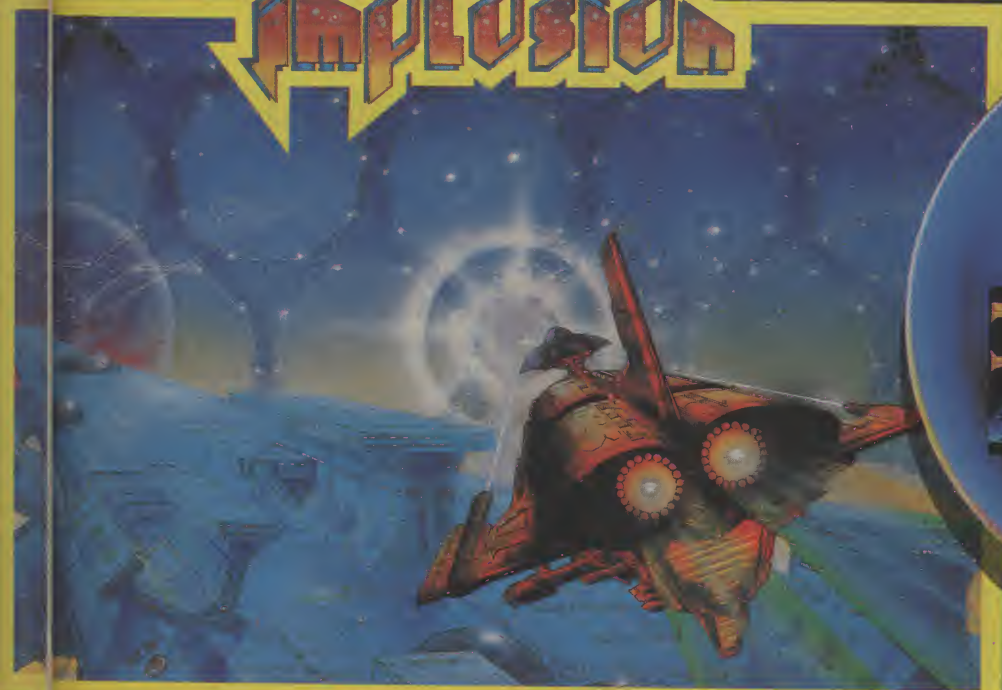
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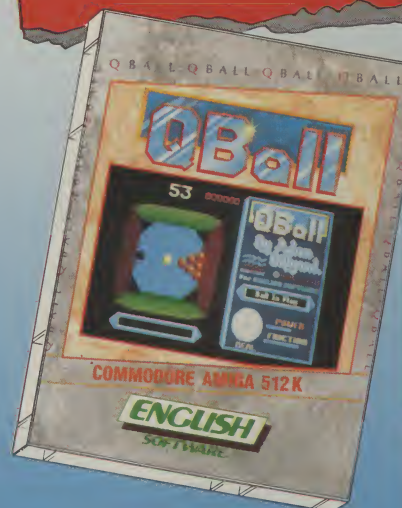
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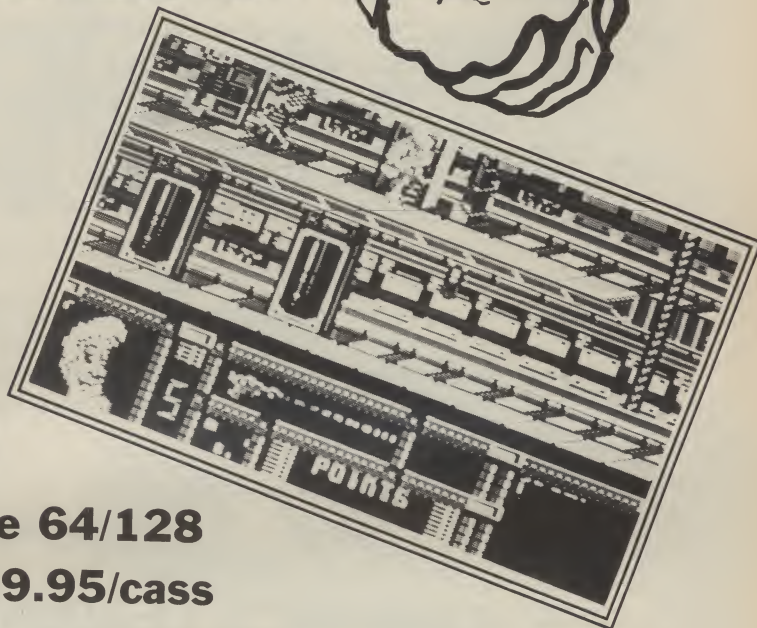
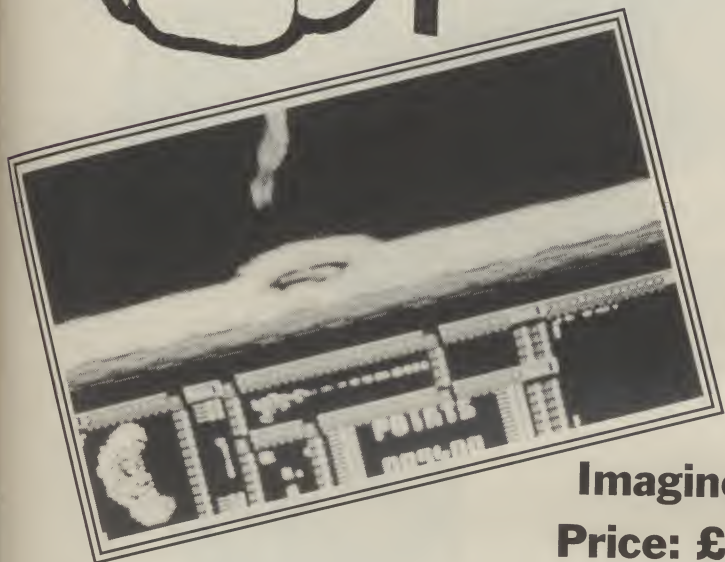
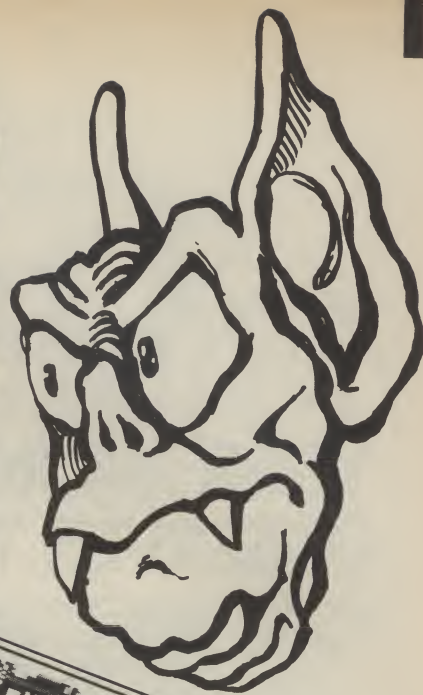
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FREDDY HARDEST



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Freddy is everything a man wants to be, handsome confident, strong, brave, intelligent (well almost.) Not totally unlike myself, in fact. But unlike myself, even Freddy isn't totally perfect. He has one big problem, his swollen ego all too often tends to overrule his good sense. So you can imagine what happened when Freddy held one of his notorious rave ups, had too much to drink, and decided (against much protest) to go on a little whizz to the Milky Way in his ship. Foolish Freddy landed in a meteorite storm and attempted to beat his high score on Asteroids (only this time there were no three lives!)

Now on the planet Ternat Freddy discovers that he is near the alien base of Kaldar and must hijack some serious space-wheels and get the hell out of there if he is going to have any chance of survival.

Your job is to take the role of Freddy Hardest and to blast, kick and leap your way through the game's two levels. Two levels may not

sound like much but if a god like Freddy needs your help it must be bloody difficult. The game is played on the planet's surface, Freddy must make it from left to right avoiding all aliens which cross his path. Well, he doesn't really have to avoid the aliens, he can always dispose of them if he pleases, either by karate kicking the ones that fly over his head, or blasting his laser in to the belly of the ones on ground level.

These unfortunately are not the only problems our hero will have to face on the first level of his quest, and they are not by any means the hardest either. Without doubt, of all Freddy's wondrous qualities (and he has many) is his ability to jump high in to the air. There are many craters full to the brim with bubbling acid that our handsome hero will have to leap over, unless of course he wants his rugged good looks spoilt. Without doubt though the trickiest

feature of the first level has to be the large gaps in the planet's surface, these are so wide that to cross them you must land on a moving platform and then leap off it to safety on the other side. Not easy!!

Part two is a fat lot more complex than part one, which plays as a simple arcade game. To reach part two you must have the access code which you receive at the end of part one. Freddy's part one mission was to reach the enemy base. Now he has arrived there he must escape. But it's not that simple. There are three steps to be completed, first he must obtain the captain's code, then he must load the ship's energy, and finally, discover the instructions which will send him in to hyperspace and home again.

The second level looks extremely similar to V, although it isn't by any means a copy. The aliens from the first level are unfortunately still

around though, and your laser has this nasty habit of running out. But luckily, on level two Freddy has mastered the skill of boxing, so if all else fails smash 'em in the gob!

The way to clear the second level is to collect the nuclear energy cells and then put them on to the special loading lifts. This is not too easy as the base is made up of three levels and finding your way out isn't too easy.

Freddy Hardest is not the most original game I've ever played, and probably not one of the most captivating either. Still, the first level is fairly addictive, in a certain strange way, but they should have made it longer and tougher instead of bothering to put a second rate arcade adventure on the other side. Graphically it isn't half as good as its Spectrum counterpart, and the sound is Spectrum simulated (Beep! Beep! Knoworrimean?) Still if anyone feels like a little arcade fun, you could do worse.

Ferdy Hamilton

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

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Overall



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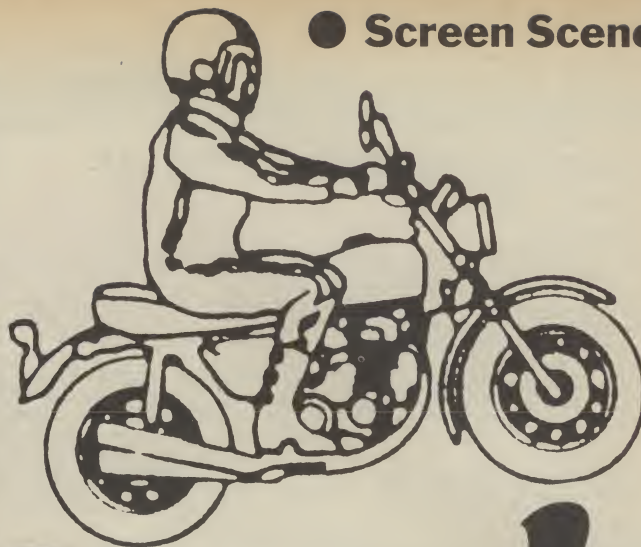
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Mirrorsoft
64/128
Price:
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The last Mirrorsoft game I was fortunate enough to look at was *Defender of the Crown*, I

and kill anyone who dare to set tyre upon it. So dare you accept the challenge. You do? Well then, mount your bike and go!

The game scrolls diagonally across the screen and is seen from raised view. Your Mean Streak cycle has the ability to speed up, and slow down (Wow! — Ed). It can also fire rockets and shoot bullets, or slime a bit of oil in the path of anyone who



Mean Streak

would be very surprised if Mirrorsoft could possibly make this game as graphically beautiful and compelling as their brilliant Cinemaware conversion for the 64 but who knows?

Eddie Kidd became a model. Street Hawk took his last commercial break. Why? Because this, my gasoline guzzling friends is the 23rd Century, life is not lived outside of the home, people have learnt the brilliant, if rather unsociable art of molecular transportation, roads are now barren and unused.

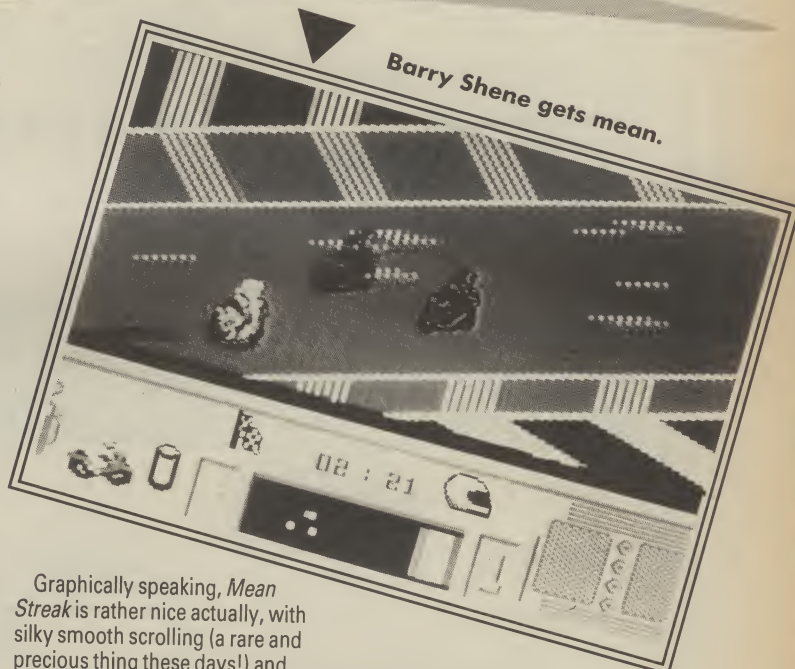
This idealistically perfect society suits all but a group of rebels, this group have offered the grand prize of the ultimate motor-bike, the Mean Streak. To earn this majestic prize you must travel along all five levels of the infamous Battletrack, a ring road which is the perimeter of the capital city (Once the M25!) and return alive. Easy.? No way, not with an evil bunch of suckers like the Outcasts who ride the Battletrack

dare approach it from behind. The enemy Outcasts are also on motorbikes almost identical to yours in every way, but for the ability to fire rockets. Oh, and their bikes don't have the stunning chrome paint job either! Shooting up the outcasts isn't the only problem you're going to have to face either, not by a long way. There is obviously a craze in the 23rd Century that tells fashion-conscious people, that the trendiest thing anyone can do is throw litter on the Battletrack (either that or my family has been for a picnic along that way) because there is an amazingly large amount of debris littered along the floor which will damage your tyres, causing a blow out and a loss of one of your five lives. A tyre blow out, is just one of the many ways a rebel with a ridiculous cause can expect to meet his death. He could also run out of time, fuel, oil or maybe he could get shot once too often!

Don't burst in to tears on me now though, there are ways of cushioning these blows.

You can pick up an extra oil, fuel, and rockets.

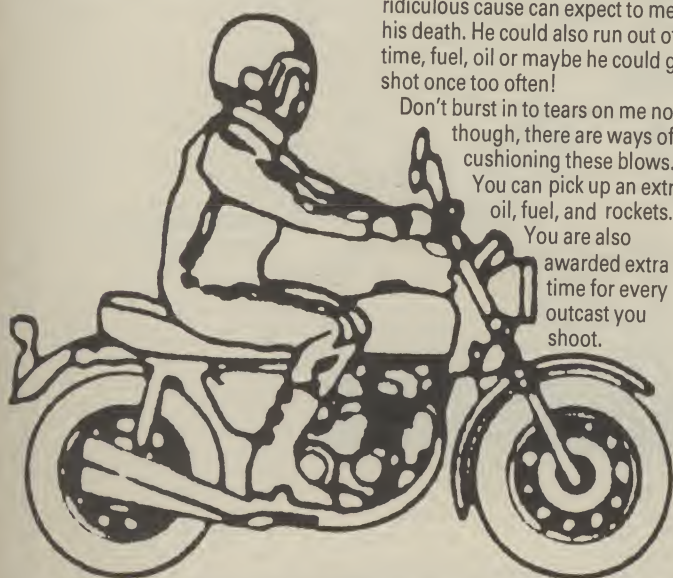
You are also awarded extra time for every outcast you shoot.



Graphically speaking, *Mean Streak* is rather nice actually, with silky smooth scrolling (a rare and precious thing these days!) and some very attractive sprites. Sound is also well done, and with the competition which gives you the chance to win a mountain bike (v. *Trendy bikes with large handlebars and matching price tags.*) for the one who completes it first, why am I not raving about it you may wonder? Well, it is enjoyable but only for a fairly short time. It hasn't got that addictive punch that an arcade

game needs and neither has it the complexity needed for an arcade adventure, so it's left there oscillating with an ego crisis. But if you're fairly well off and in need of a rather short-lived bit of fun, go on be a devil. Oh, and er... Mirrorsoft I'll gladly give you a screen star... if you'll send me a mountain bike.

Ferdy Hamilton



Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

7
Overall

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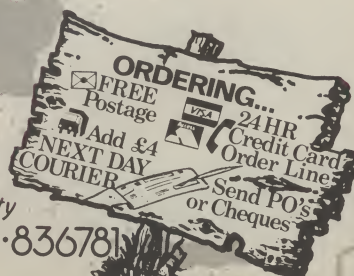
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Twenty years ago, a wayward meteor arced across the warm American night sky and ploughed into the backyard of a towering gothic mansion. A brief explosion followed, a sudden flaring of lighted windows, and then... silence, broken only by the sound of the crickets.

So begins *Maniac Mansion*, the latest from Lucasfilm Games, and an affectionate spoof of mad scientist B-movies and campus splatter flicks. It's *Pyscho*, *Friday 13th*, the *Adams Family* and *Rocky Horror Show* all rolled into one; a story of chainsaws, shower-curtains, obscene phone calls, microwave ovens and mondo stereo.

It's also one of the new breed of adventure games, eliminating keyboard input by opting for a joystick-controlled cursor, which hovers over objects in the animation window and selects verbs and nouns from the vocabulary list at the bottom of the screen. It's fast, effective, and will probably have text-adventure purists up in arms.

In the depths of *Maniac Mansion*, the sinister Dr Fred has kidnapped Sandy Pantz, a cheerleader from the local college, and is apparently preparing to dry-clean her brains as part of his plans for world domination. Dave, Sandy's clean-cut boyfriend and all-round jock, gets together a search party of six fellow



Crooney kid examines the statue — it's a red herring.

students, including streetwise punks, bookworms and surfer dudes, each with his or her own talents and obsessions.

From the six, two kids must be



Try a quick game of Alien Slime.

chosen to accompany Dave on his rescue mission, and how they go about thwarting Dr Fred depends on which students are selected. Not only will their individual skills be called upon, but their personalities will also influence events. Physics wiz Bernard (winner of the college geek award) might be handy when it comes to messing with the nuclear generator in the basement, but he's a definite liability when he comes up against the inhabitants of the house.

According to the instruction booklet, these inhabitants are 'weird', which is a bit like describing Hitler as eccentric. For starters, there's Fred's wife Edna, an ex-health care nurse who's into electric cattle prods, and her son Ed, a paranoid self-styled commando with a hamster fixation. Then there's Dead Cousin Ted, embalmed and living in a sarcophagus.

This crowd are relatively sane when compared to the others to be encountered — such as the potted fern called Chuck, and a disembodied Green Tentacle who's a depressed hipi freak and wants to make it as a rock star. And there's a Nameless Something behind the scenes, an alien being who's pulling the strings and who's got something to do with the meteor in the backyard.

The mansion is a warren of rooms

and corridors on several floors, and includes a photographic dark room, a recording studio, and a room packed with arcade coin-ops.

Through all this moves your team of three, either independently or as a gang, doing all the usual adventure things — opening locked doors, picking up useless objects, completely failing to either solve the puzzles or to avoid the clutches of Fred & Co. Some problems — like using the hidden lever to open the generator room door — need two characters.

Fortunately, the programmers have done away with that infuriating convention which allows each character to only carry one or two items at a time, and Dave and his chums can stow away as many rotting turkeys, chainsaws, and keys as they can lay their hands on.

Much of the action is animated — at least to the extent that characters can walk up and down stairs and across rooms. More complex actions, like playing the piano or tuning in an antique radio, are represented by the character standing in front of the furniture with appropriate sound effects. And from time to time you're treated to a short film sequence of events elsewhere in the house. So that you

get to see Sandy being menaced by a 'purple slime geek'.

With character interaction on and off screen, and all those large sprites to animate, it's not surprising that both sides of the disk get accessed continually. This doesn't hold up the action, and swapping sides is kept to a minimum.



Outside the weird mansion with the gang.

At 15 quid *Maniac Mansion* isn't much more expensive than disk versions of other animated adventures (such as *Stifflyp & Co*) and the opportunity for re-playing the game using different characters more than compensates.

But, ultimately, *Maniac Mansion* is still an adventure game, and the flash graphics and black humour won't appeal to those punters who prefer the immediate delights of arcade games. Of its kind, it's one of the best around, and if, like me, you can eat this kind of stuff with a spoon, then you won't be disappointed.

Bill Scolding

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

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Screen shots taken from various computer formats

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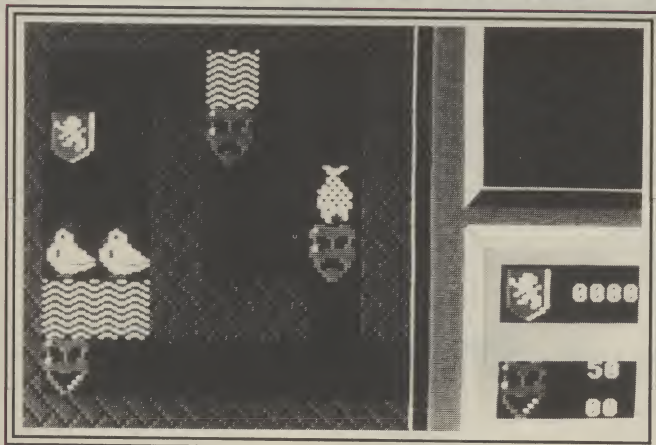
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For those of you who don't know about these things XOR is a machine code instruction which manipulates bits of data. If you think that's boring you'll have to agree that this game is aptly titled. XOR is like a cross between a three year old game called *Boulderdash* which involved a lot of falling rocks, and a prehistoric thing for the ZX81 called *Mazogs*. In other words it's a maze game with things that fall on your head. In their day *Boulderdash* and *Mazogs* were pretty good, but things have moved on a bit since then haven't they?

There are fifteen mazes in all which, although they are similar in rough layout and design, have various different properties. All fifteen of them are displayed on a menu bar and you can start with whichever one you want. My advice is to start with the first one and work your way down — they get progressively more difficult. On completion of each maze you are



XOR



given a letter. When you have all fifteen letters you are in possession of an encrypted clue to XOR's true nature. You can send this off to Logotron for a certificate and badge declaring you a member of the Order of XOR. I can hardly wait.

The first maze is called dots and waves, which might have something to do with the two different kinds of force field barring some of the routes. You have control of two shields, one depicting a lion, the other with a chevron. Control is switched from one to the other by

pressing the fire button. In this first maze there are 47 masks and you must collect the whole lot within a specified number of moves before leaving by the door and collecting a letter of the code. That's all there is to it.

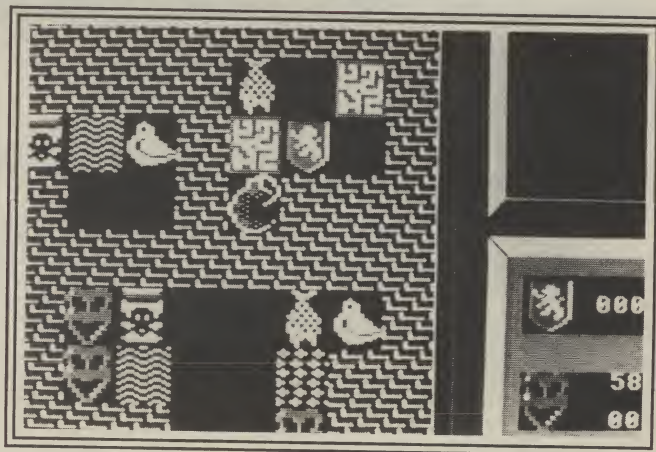
Unusually, there are no spooks to chase you around, no sneaky traps, no keys to find. All that stands between you and the masks are these force fields. The dotted ones can be passed through horizontally and the wavy lines disappear if you travel vertically through them. The

Screen Scene

have to pick up four map segment icons which are located in different parts of the maze. Unfortunately there is no map showing you where the map segments are.

The remaining fourteen mazes are based on the first with various things introduced to complicate matters. The first of these is fish. Fish are to XOR what rocks are to *Boulderdash*. They perch on top of maze walls and if you bump into them they fall blocking your only exit. Later on, fish can be used to explode bombs and make new paths, but you have to be careful you don't blow yourself up with them. A variation on the theme is spring loaded chickens which shoot off to the right or left when any obstacle is removed from their path. In the later mazes things can get very complicated. Working out the end result of removing a mask stuck between half a ton of fish and a dozen or so chickens is a time consuming business and the 'try it and see' approach inevitably ends in disaster.

XOR can definitely be classed in the strategy/tactical bracket, a game for people who like to think for half an hour before making a move. But does it have to be this dull? The graphics are very ordinary and the only sound available is one of those awful pink plonk beep tunes which sounded pathetic even five years



only problem arises if you need to go up or down through a dotted force field or sideways through a wavy one, in which case you'll have to find another route.

The map will help you find your way around, but to get all of it you

ago. The best thing that I can find to say about it is that it's 'O.K.', but nothing special. My mate Malcolm liked it, but then he's from Newcastle and wears a bright yellow waterproof.

Ken McMahon

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

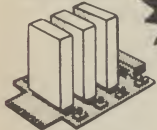
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Overall



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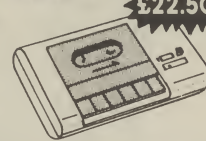
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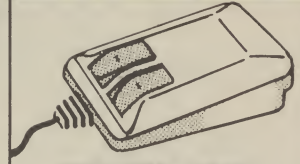
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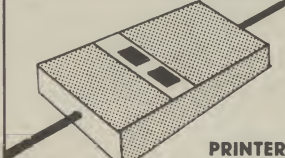
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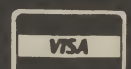
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Jack the Nipper 2 COCONUT CAPERS



Jack is back pumping up the needle on the Naughtyometer.

Gremlin had a surprise success a year or so back with a naughty number called *Jack the Nipper*, can the sequel possibly kick up as much fun as the first game?

For those of you who didn't take my trusty guidance and buy the first game (it was awarded a screen star) our hero, Jack, well he's a nipper, but what a naughty little nipper he is. In his first taste of stardom, did he try and save the human race? Did he try and rescue a damsel in distress? No, not on your life, he spent all his time running around his home town causing as much mischief as possible, be it by injuring the residents with his pea-shooter or short circuiting the computers in the local sprocket shop.

Well, obviously the antics of this not-so-loveable brat did not amuse the townsfolk a great deal, and it wasn't too long before Jack was evicted and sentenced to life with kangaroos, koalas, and Paul Hogan (Yuk!)

As you can guess there was no way our hell-raising hero was going to stand for that, so while on the Australia-bound plane he leapt out over an unknown wilderness, using his over-sized nappy as a parachute. Now you control Jack on his ventures in the unknown jungle and try to cause as much mischief as possible without getting caught by Mummy and Daddy and getting a botty-spanking!

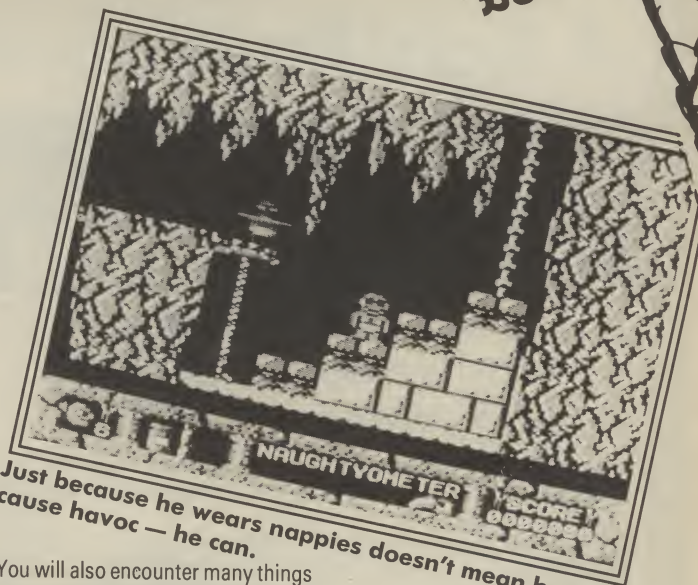
The game is set over a much larger area than its predecessor, which was only around ten screens or so. It is also much more of an orthodox 'pick up/drop/shoot/jump' arcade adventure than the rather brilliantly abstract original game. The main part of playing the game is really based on surviving the jungle horrors such as the hostile tribesmen, or the nipper-eating plants, rather than causing major mischief to residents. Jack can however pick up weapons, bouncing coconuts are among those found, these can give anyone a real headache, or choose the blowpipe. There are also bombs which can cause major hassle if let off in the right place.

However, the best mischief is not to be had through blasting things. As in the first game there are many plain looking objects lying around that can be turned to good use. You can hold any two objects at one time, should you be holding a 'correct' pair in the right place then you will be the catalyst to some serious whacky happenings. The objective is to boost your naughty-ometer until you are a real mean mother instead of the little wimp you originally start out at. The way to boost the meter is to do some real nasty deviant tricks not simply lob a few coconuts around. (Gremlin will send you 'a guide to

good mischief' if you ask nicely!)

As you begin to find your way around the vast jungle you will encounter various problems such as alligator-infested swamps, and even the odd troublesome tourist (cameras, check trousers and all!)

**Gremlin
Graphics
64/128
Price:
£9.95**



Just because he wears nappies doesn't mean he can't cause havoc — he can.

You will also encounter many things to your aid, invincibility potions, and extra lives (even the nine you are given aren't enough). One of the most important things to get you around in the jungle are the "Beam me up, Kelly" transporters — although they can't be seen so you'll have to find them by the systematic approach of trial and error.

Jaque le Nippierre as he is commonly known in France, was one of last year's most colourful characters but he's definitely lost some of his 'street cred' with this.

With many sequels all you seem to end up with is a mixed and diluted version of the original, this sadly is the fate of *Coconut Capers*, it simply doesn't have the spunk of the original.

Witty gameplay has been forsaken for a more conservative, mediocre approach. Graphics are well done, with many nice touches (Jack gives you a V-sign if you pause for too long!) Sound, too is good. But as goes the old saying "Too many screens spoil the brat." (Eh?-Ed.)

Ferdy Hamilton

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

7
Overall

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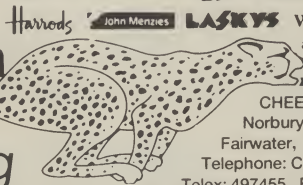
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Into the drink goes your buggy.



Made it! Now to the next section.



Whoops! The buggy takes a flyer.



BUGGY BOY



64/128
Elite
Price:
£9.95 cass
£14.95 disk

Yipes! another arcade conversion. But this is no recent mega licence, in fact it harks back to mid '85. *Buggy Boy* was a great game at the time though, helped along by its three screens giving a really wide-angled view of oncoming traffic, fences, trees, rocks and so forth. *Buggy Boy* nowadays strikes me as being the forerunner more than anything else of *Out Run*.

There are four courses and one practice track. Each one apart from the practice track is divided into stages, for which you are given seventy-five seconds to zip through in your dune buggy, which has a cute way of bouncing around the

track as you accelerate. Sadly where *Elite* have tried to fit the three lanes onto one screen the graphics have been noticeably shrunk down to accommodate the compression down to a single screen for the computer version.

None of the features have been lost in the transference from the arcade version though. You have excellent features like footballs which can be rammed out of the way for bonus points, jump pads which do just that and leave you realistically bouncing out of control after landing, and ramps which, when ridden over, tilt the buggy onto two of its side wheels (it stays like that providing the vehicle is not steered to much.) Speaking of steering, the Japanese would be interested in the design for this buggy, the road handling is so good no matter how tight the bend if you just let go of the joystick it will steer itself through the trouble spot

(gripe, gripe, sorry *Elite*).

Some nice effects have been included in the game though, great touches like tunnels and bridges have been faithfully reproduced. The tracks are well designed too, with jump pads conveniently placed so that if used, there is no way you're gonna reach that five-hundred point gate just coming up on the horizon. And there's flags as well, sadly they mostly seem to cover large rocks. Large buggy-crunching rocks.

You either like conversions or you don't. And because of the complexity of arcade machines nowadays it is increasingly harder to 'downgrade' onto the conventional eight-bit micro. But *Elite* have come up with a little gem here. The graphics are very well designed with one or two little faults here and there, such as glitches and wobbly rocks.

The sound is adequate but still

confined to being the same old droning noise which seems to rear it's very ugly head in absolutely every single car/race game I have ever played. Could I recommend an ancient two gear buggy with a top speed of two-hundred and twenty miles an hour slick scrolling and high addictiveness? Of course! Initially it takes a wee bit of getting into, but afterwards I'm sure you'll have no regrets at purchasing this game.

I hope *Buggy Boy* will set an example to other companies and they will forget about major TV/Film tie-ins and hydraulic mega arcade machines and get on with converting the arcade classics that have previously been overlooked. *Buggy Boy* is good, probably one of the most accurate conversions to date. If you're a fan it's a must, if you're not, it's a must.

Mark Patterson



C.U.
Screen
Star

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

8
Overall

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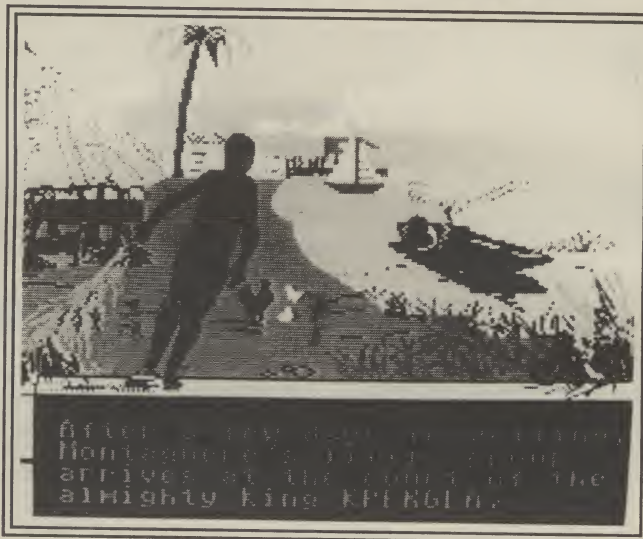
PASSENGERS ON THE WIND 2

Remember *Passengers on the Wind*, reviewed in August? This was the game that, according to its excitable publishers Infograms, promised 'a software revolution, the revolution of the film in which you are the hero'. Marvel at the 'exceptional quality graphics' they commanded, 'live moments of poetry and wonder.'

The trouble was, although the graphics were indeed impressive, the rest of the game wasn't. Tedious gameplay, an incomprehensible plot full of anonymous characters, peculiar dialogue translated from idiomatic French — all combined to produce the software equivalent of the sub-titled movies that Channel 4 puts out when no-one's watching.

Just about the only things which stopped the game disappearing like a pebble in a bucket of merde was an astonishing high nipple-count and a short-lived moment of glory in the *News on Sunday*. Well, this hasn't deterred the indefatigable French, who went right on and brought out the sequel, ingeniously titled *Passengers on the Wind 2*. Like part one, it's based on Francois Bourgeon's comic strip 'masterpiece', and is the continuing story of Isabeau, an 18th century nobleperson, and her attempts to regain her lost title and riches.

The screen format and gameplay remain the same, with a large graphics screen which displays the scenery of each location, onto which are overlaid comic strip frames when the action hots up. Below this is the portrait window, used for selecting the characters you wish to control, and the text window which reveals their thoughts and speech. Selection of icons is by joystick or keyboard-controlled cursor, and



▲ Nice view, wish the gameplay was as clear.

often entails unnecessary precision particularly at the start of each episode, where you must embark on a frustrating search across the landscape to find the single pixel which unlocks the action.

Six of the seven episodes take place in West African slave colonies, and the plot, less sprawling than that of part one, has our heroine taking part in archery contests and bloody voodoo ceremonies, trekking across the lion-infested savannah, and generally dispensing wit, repartee and a few philosophical thoughts about slavery. And there's a bit of animated snogging, baby snatching and duelling for good measure.

To complete the story you must

get all the characters speaking in the correct sequence, and saying and doing the right things. But no clues are given to help you, so your choice is often arbitrary. Should Aiuan or Isa shoot the lion? Is Hoel well enough to go to France or not? Does Isa gets some shut-eye or go skinny-dipping in the river instead?

Just to make things entirely impossible, some active ingredients have been hidden in the pictures, so that in episode two, for instance, you have to pass the cursor over the grubby neck of the ancient mariner. There's no earthly reason why you should even think of doing this, but if you don't then Jasmin starts groping Alihosi, Isa misses out on some juju action in episode four,

and Hoel snuffs it in episode five.

To add to the confusion, each episode concludes with a wise man popping up from nowhere and asking questions reminiscent of school exam papers, and which are supposed to help you on your way: 'In this story, which bird is the symbol of honour? To which Isa replies, 'A guinea fowl, I suppose can also be found in Asia.' What?!!

While some recognition should go to Infograms for taking software into unexplored territory, all they've produced is at best an interesting but unsuccessful experiment, and at worst a muddled travesty of a comic strip of entertainment value. whatsoever. I can't possibly think of who might want to buy it; owners of *Passengers Full of Wind 1* will obviously stay well clear, and no-one else will have the slightest idea of what is going on.

Bill Scolding

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Overall										4

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SUPERSTAR ★ ICE HOCKEY

Ice hockey can hardly be classed as one of Britain's most popular spectator sports, which probably explains why there have been so few home computer interpretations of the game. Anirog's (now Anco) *Slapshot* is the only other game of this type that springs to mind.

Superstar Ice Hockey is billed as the first complete ice hockey simulation, which basically means that the designers have attempted to capture all the thrills and spills of a 'real' ice hockey league by incorporating as many rules and play strategies as possible.

There seems little point relating the rules to the uninitiated — suffice

it to say, ice hockey is essentially a bastardised version of soccer on ice, with a puck instead of a ball. The puck isn't kicked — it's manipulated with a stick. (And GP's a poet — and didn't even know it Ed.)

In *Superstar Ice Hockey* the opposition can be controlled by flesh or microchip, or a combination of both. With the exception of the coaches, centres (sic) and goalies,

International Soccer, and subsequently playability is further marred by the fact that the screen follows the progress of the puck, not that of your player. Worse still, the centre is slow to respond to joystick input and movement is inertial — which means that the skater takes an excruciatingly long time to turn.

Rules and strategies, for example, are far easier to relate to and execute in a real game of hockey than in a joystick controlled simulation. And anyway, using a joystick to choose a strategy from a limited selection is hardly realistic.

There just isn't enough playability in *Superstar Ice Hockey* to make it entertaining, and the lack of atmosphere and rewarding strategy is poor compensation for anyone

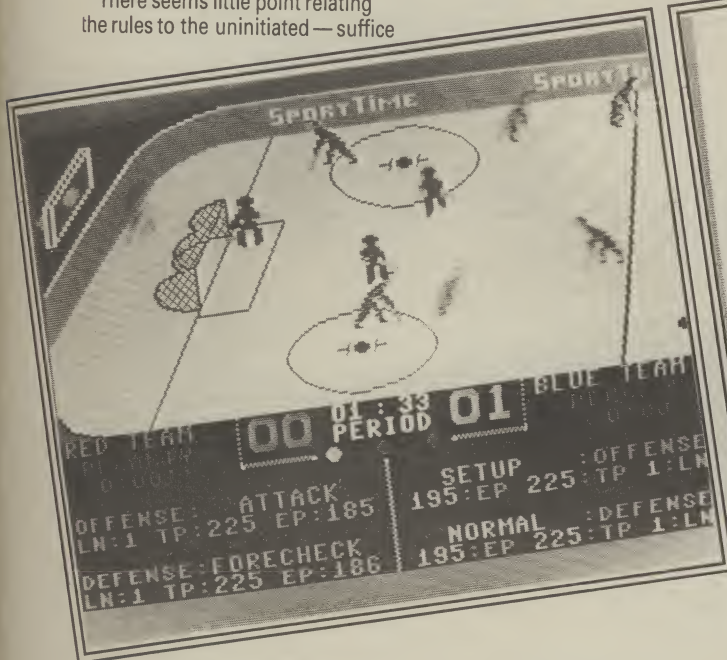
the computer always synchronises the team's actions. Alternatively you can leave the computer to control the centre or goalie, or to make the coach's decisions regarding simplistic offensive and defensive strategies.

A human player can control two of the three variables — but not the centre and the goalie together. Being able to control only one player out of the whole team is one of *Superstar Ice Hockey's* most annoying flaws. Control is never transferred to other team members, as in, say, Andrew Spencer's

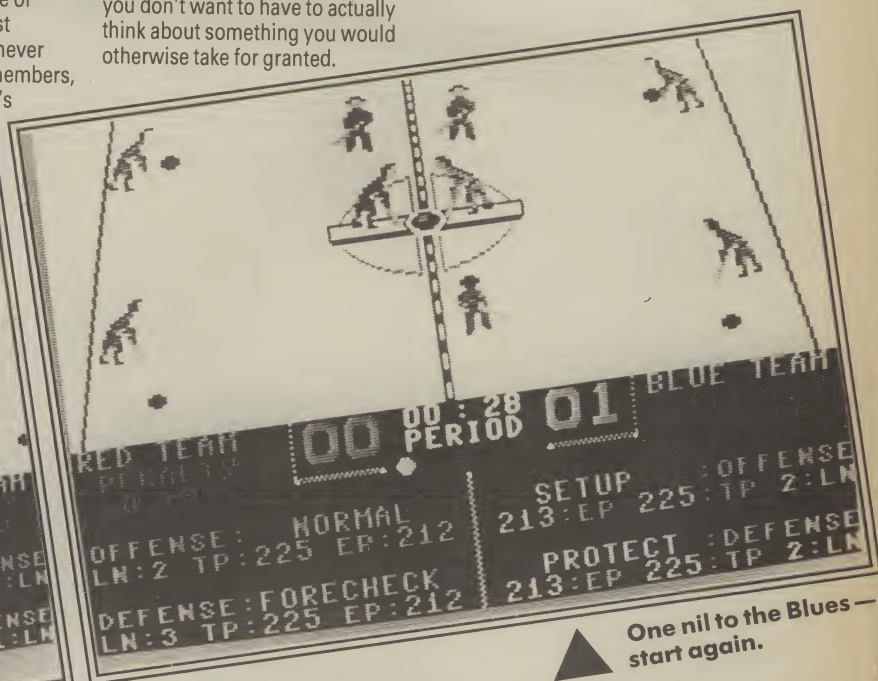
While this may arguably be deemed realistic, it's far from conducive to a playable environment. When it boils down to it, there's little point in attempting to make any computer simulation so realistic, as reality is full of many tedious, mundane actions which we perform instinctively. And when you're trying to relax and enjoy yourself playing a computer game, you don't want to have to actually think about something you would otherwise take for granted.

interested in ice hockey. Designer Ed Ringler ought to take a leaf out of Andrew Spencer's book. *International Soccer* is a prime example of how to capture the flavour of a sport in a computer game — the emphasis is on atmosphere and playability, not accuracy.

Gary Penn



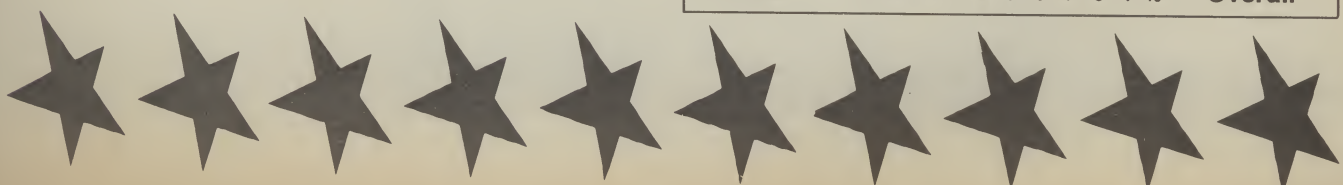
▲ Its in the net.



▲ One nil to the Blues — start again.

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4
 Overall





64/128
Ocean
Price:
£9.95/
cass

MAD BALLS



When a software company like Ocean pays good money for the licence to a load of rubber balls, then things are surely getting desperate.

The balls in question are Mad, and they're not really balls so much as disembodied heads, with protruding tongues, bulging red-veined eyes, horns, warts, scars and fangs. They've got cheerful names like Slobulus and Swine Sucker, and appear occasionally on children's TV when the adults are safely out of the way. A spokesperson for Ocean described them as 'pretty gross'.

On the computer screen, however, they're about as stomach-churning as Bobby Bearing with a hare-lip. They inhabit a world of pavements, dustbins and gym equipment known as the planet Orb, and they spend most of their meaningful lives trying to bounce each other off the walkways and into the net which is suspended below.

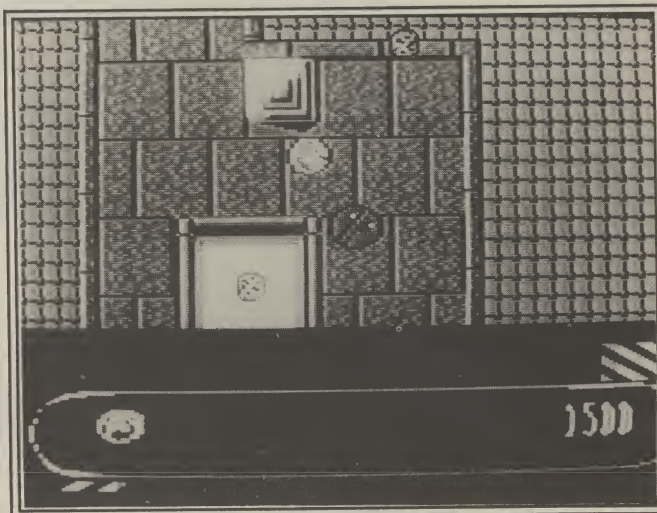
Fortunately for everyone concerned, the programmers who've been give the thankless task of somehow making a game out of all this are Denton Design. They've succeeded in producing something that is so well presented and playable that you almost forget how stupid the whole thing is.

For starters, the Dentons have opted for a novel overhead view of the action, so that instead of watching the balls bounce along from the side, what you see are balls which get bigger as they bounce high, and smaller as they fall back to earth.

This is a bit weird at first, and after an hour or two it can do strange things to your eyes, but overall it works very well, and the effect can be quite startling, especially when a ball zooms off a trampoline for an extra high bounce.

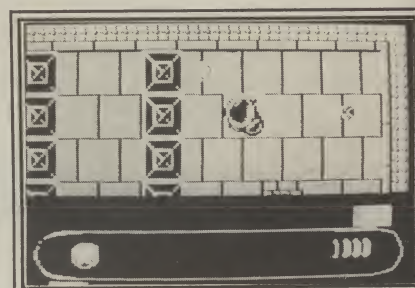
Once you've orientated yourself, you can get down to the serious business of mugging other balls and exploring the tricky terrain. To begin with you're controlling one particular Mad Ball called Dust Brain, who sets out to find the seven other Mad Balls, and recruit them into his gang by knocking them into the goal nets.

The maze of paved paths is riddled with holes and chasms, and there are dustbins, pyramids, catapults, springboards, rubber tyres and eggs to bounce over or on to, all accompanied by suitable sound effects. Bouncing over this obstacle course would be bad enough unmolested, but as it is, your progress is usually hindered by unfriendly balls trying to spin you off the path.



Get extra lift from trampoline.

You'll soon discover that most of the attacking balls aren't Mad at all, but featureless balls called 'bureaucrats'. Booting them into goal scores a few brownie points but otherwise doesn't get you very far. Every time you mug a genuine Mad



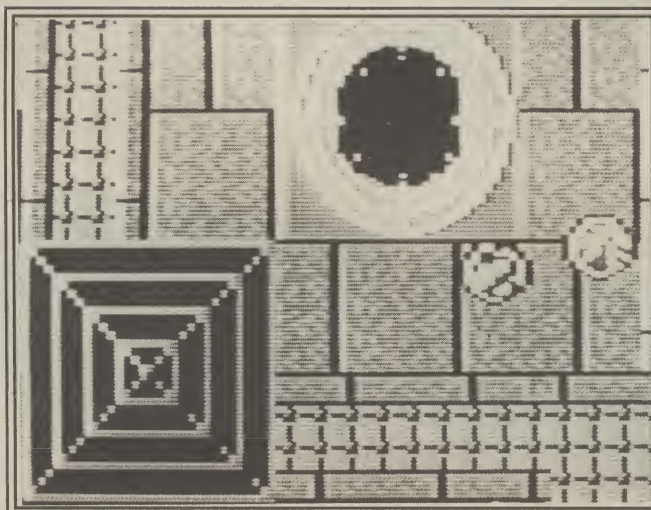
A load of balls.

environment and the scattered food supplies. So Dust Brain can be exchanged for another by dropping him down an open dustbin to join the captured Mad Balls, knocking the last in line out of the tube and back into play again.

A lot of attention to detail has been lavished on this staggeringly mindless game, which is crammed full of nice touches, like the clang! as you bounce onto a dustbin lid, and the tiny chick which scampers around frantically, just after you've released it from its egg, and just before you stomp on it. Keyboard and joystick control is responsive and realistic, simulating very well the unpredictable rebounds and bounces.

I can't remember the last time I had so much fun bouncing severed heads in and out of dustbins.

Bill Scolding



Go for goal.

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

7
Overall

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BEAT IT

Now I've played games from Mastertronic and some of them are great, and some of them are chronic, and some of them are junk and some of them are jive, and some must've been written by a child of five. But now listen to me and what I'm rappin' This little number's gonna get your footsies tappin'. It's a musical maze arcade game and it's called *Beat It!* And if I ain't wrong it's gonna be a hit.

The aim of the game is short and it's simple (and could've been written on the head of a pimple) rockin' Rodney and Rachel are right little ravers and you gotta help them to pick up all the quavers 'cause at the start of each screen you hear a drum machine and a poundin' bass riff — if you catch my drift — but this background beat ain't too hot 'n' punky so you gotta add some notes to make it REAL funky. There are 16 notes in each psychedelic maze of shifting paths and patterns going every which ways and every note you grab gets added to the beat 'til the song gets stronger and the boogie gets neat. Now if this was all then the game would be naff but there are various meanies hoppin' up on each path. Hit a few bum notes and your tune will start to go like a three-note solo from Status Quo.

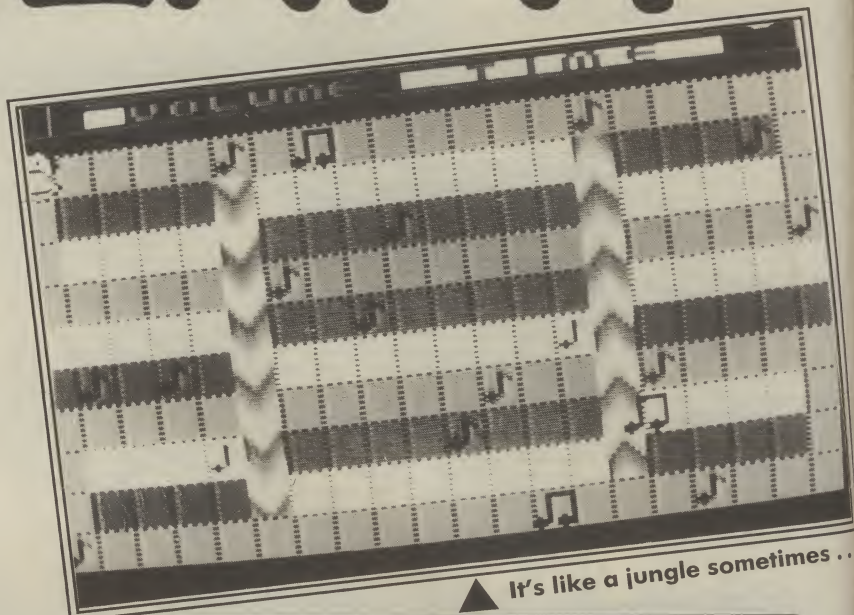
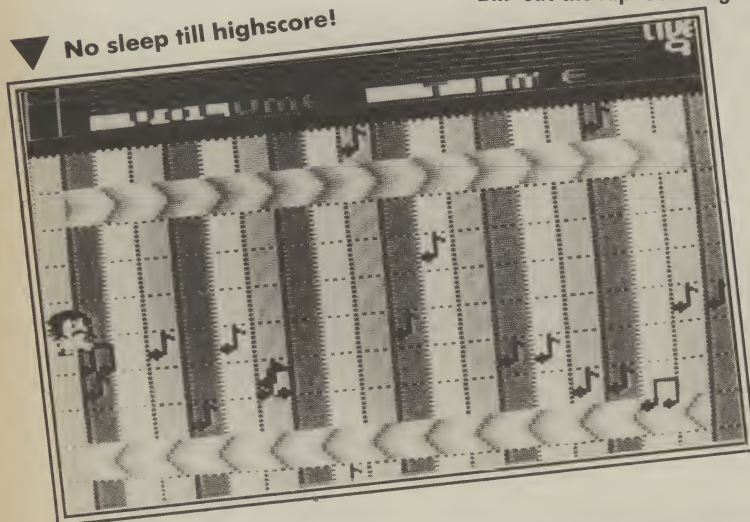
There are gloom masks and coppers who turn your volume down and bombs, frogs, and Angries who blow you outta town. If you run into a fuzz box your tune will be distorted and don't mess with Norm or Maggie or your plans will be thwarted Now if you finish Level One you've got no time for restin' 'cause there's another 59, and I ain't jestin'.

And some you'll find a doddle, and on some you'll wind up dead and Level 42's real boring (*well what do you expect? Ed.*)

So pin back your shell-likes and listen to this rap, *Beat It!* is really something — it ain't no pile of crap. The animation's cool, and the graphics are really neat and for all you wimps out there it's got an infinite lives cheat. You can't play it with the keyboard but you can play it with a 'stick you can play it until those groovy colours nearly make you sick. You can play it all night and you can really have a ball you can play it 'til that disco beat drives you up the wall. 'Cause if there's one thing wrong with this fun 'n' funky game it's those bloody boogie rhythms goin' round and round your brain.

Bill 'cut the rap' Scolding

▼ **No sleep till highscore!**



▲ It's like a jungle sometimes...

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

7
Overall

64/128
Price: £2.99/
cass

Mastertronic's game-naming team must have worked overtime on this one. *Kromazone* is an above average name for a game, but not quite in the Twiglet Zone league. Like most Master T games these days, it features a naff little game to play whilst the main game is loading, complete with Rob Hubbard tune. My, how things have advanced. I remember when flickering loading screens were state-of-the-art (*you old git—Ed.*)

Kromazone, as you already know, is the most feared testing ground of the Terran Space Fleet Naval Academy. Only the best pilots, ie the ones who know their hand signals, are allowed to test their skill and determination to the absolute limits.

KROMAZONE



▲ **High blast-per-penny rating**



To reach the unreachable town.

STARLIFTER

64/128
Price: £1.99/
cass

You can't expect much in the way of sustained entertainment from budget games, but the good ones should keep you occupied at least until Bob's Full House has finished. And *Starlifter* fits the bill perfectly.

It's one of those two-way horizontal scrolling jobs in which you blast anything that moves, that's if you can survive the storm of bullets that seem to appear from nowhere, flying across the screen in both directions.

Since Mastertronic are usually pretty good with their stories, I'll let

you in on the scenario, which involves the evil Peradusians who are slugging it out with the allies on the forgotten planets of Farantoo and Seratzo. My view on this is, if they're forgotten, they can't really be worth all this blasting, but 2150AD politics were never my strong point.

Anyway, you have to destroy their cargo vessels which, like the convoys in the Gulf, are protected by fighters. Cargo vessels blow you up if you touch them, but the fighters blast back at you, so the best strategy is to blast both of them

without dithering about which is which.

You are set a target of vessels to blast in each level, indicated at the bottom of the screen. Sixteen is the first target, and you go up in jumps of four on successive levels. Every 5,000 points you get another life. Pretty standard stuff really. I was hoping for more blasting power as my points total went up but it looks as though a single-fire laser cannon was all the allies could muster. Maybe the Peradusians have slapped on an arms embargo.

As I said, the screen scrolls in both

nasties.

Cargo ship nasties are bigger, slower and easier to hit because they fly more in group formations. Fighters are a bit brighter than this, and will do pretty dodgy manoeuvres. Some of them, funnily enough, look just like your own ship. On higher levels, you have to blast all the fighters before more cargo ships will appear.

That's it really. The backdrop traffic jam changes a little on each level, as do the colours shapes and formations of the nasties. The only real challenge is making the high

directions with a backdrop of large spaceships lined up in a row, looking rather like an interstellar traffic jam. Your one-man fighter (it looks like an astronaut with a jetpack on) can fly both ways, as do the

score that gets you another extra life. But for two sovs, who's complaining? I liked *Starlifter*, it's well up to Mastertronic's cheapo standards.

Bohdan Buciak

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

7
Overall

KROMAZONE



And what do they get when they finally make the *Kromazone*? a multicoloured badge. So the whole thing looks like being a worthless exercise — which sums up this game very well.

Kromazone is not one of Mastertronic's better efforts. It looks reasonable, as they all do, but playability is about as good as a plastic football pitch. There's really no scope for showing off your skills.

Your view is the front cockpit of the ship. Your task is to avoid or blast the wide range of nasties that come hurtling at you. It's a bit like driving a car through a shower of hailstones (for hailstones substitute golfballs). The terrain is of the checker-board type with a cityscape

horizon that never gets any closer. You know, like the ones you get in road racing games. All the screens are the same, with just the background colours changing.

On the first level, you don't even get firepower. So all you can do is steer your way through the golfballs. A direct hit loses you one of your five levels. On successive levels, your laser cannon is activated. This is of the variety that shoots a beam from both sides of the screen to a fixed point somewhere in the middle. You have to decide whether to steer clear of the nasties or to wait until they're in range of your blaster.

There's nothing much else to do

except to proceed up the levels avoiding and blasting ever more frantic waves of space debris, what's more annoying is that some of the nasties can fire at you from behind. There's absolutely nothing you can do about this (you can't see anything from behind), and it seems to me to be just a dirty underhanded way of losing you more lives.

To be fair, the nasties are graphically impressive, so is the overall presentation in general. There's a good tune and a two-player option. But none of those can compensate for the tedium of the gameplay. Not for me, this one.

Bohdan Buciak

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4
Overall

64/128

Digital Integration

Price:£9.99 cass/£14.95 disk

If my experience is anything to go by, most people's idea of a bobsleigh is anything from a tea tray to a bin bag. The absolute killer, if you can get away with it is the fridge door. Expect stiff penalties if you're caught though.

No such mucking around with

Konigssee, Innsbruck, Winterberg, Calgary and Brueil. It has a choice of different types of bobsleigh and different types of runner for varying

pick up a little training which will give you the strength to push the bob faster to begin with.

When you've done all that there's

BOBSLEIGH

Digital Integration's *Bobsleigh*. Like all their simulations this is serious stuff featuring very expensive gear and all the best snow spots this side of the alps. DI have gone to their usual trouble to ensure that everything is as it should be.

If you've played *Winter Sports*, *Winter Events*, or anything like that, then you'll have a good idea what this is all about. I must admit to being just a bit dissappointed that *Bobsleigh* featured action and graphics no more impressive than any of its multi-event predecessors. In fact it looks very familiar. All the effort here has gone into making the simulation as real as possible, not in terms of the run itself, but in what you have to do as a team manager to get to, and win the Olympic games. So if you already have *Winter Sports* with its bobsleigh run, but are looking for improved realism in the action sequences, you'd better look somewhere else, *Bobsleigh* doesn't have it.

So what does it have? Well, it has six authentic tracks — St Moritz,

weather conditions. It has financial realism; you must pay for everything including fitness training, colour co-ordinated team gear, repairs to your bob when you write it off through careless driving, two tennis racquets in case you have to walk to the bar and a pair of ear muffs in case your bobble hat blows off. It also gets the thumbs up from the British Bobsleigh Association and Nick Phipps and Alan Cearnese, who, apparently, are pretty good at the real thing.

Off the track the whole thing is menu controlled. To begin with you will need to decide what kind of event to go in for, what kind of bob to try and kill yourself in, and whether you want to buy additional goodies like fitness training, steroids, tracksuits and the like. As a beginner your won't even get a look at the olympic course until you're rich enough to buy an olympic bob and finish in the top three at the world championships. In the early stages its best to go for the single events, moving on to six event seasons when you've at least got the skill and confidence to reach the end of the track without a major disaster. At this stage it's probably as well to

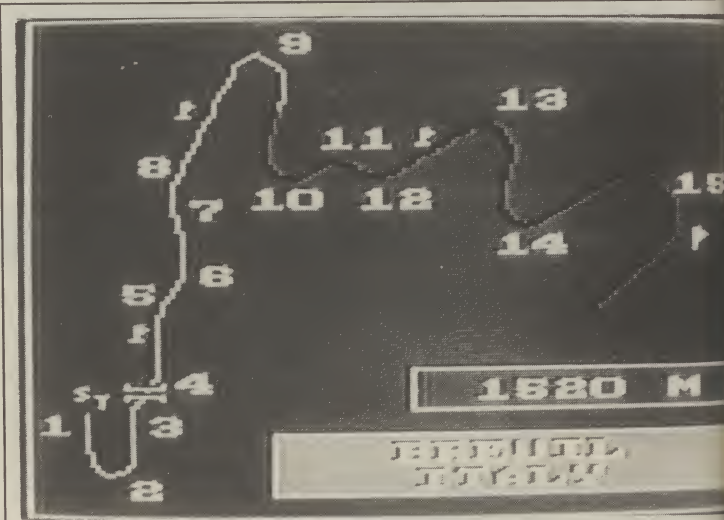
nothing left but to give it a go. In bobsleigh you get to do the run twice (whoopie!) and your two times are added together.

All the hard work comes at the beginning, where all you can see in the action window is the stationary bob with two little hands clutching the rail. Yes its time for a push start. The matrix board above your head indicates 'Get Set', turns red, then a green 'GO' signals the off and its wiggle-the-joystick-like-a-looney time. Thankfully this only lasts a few

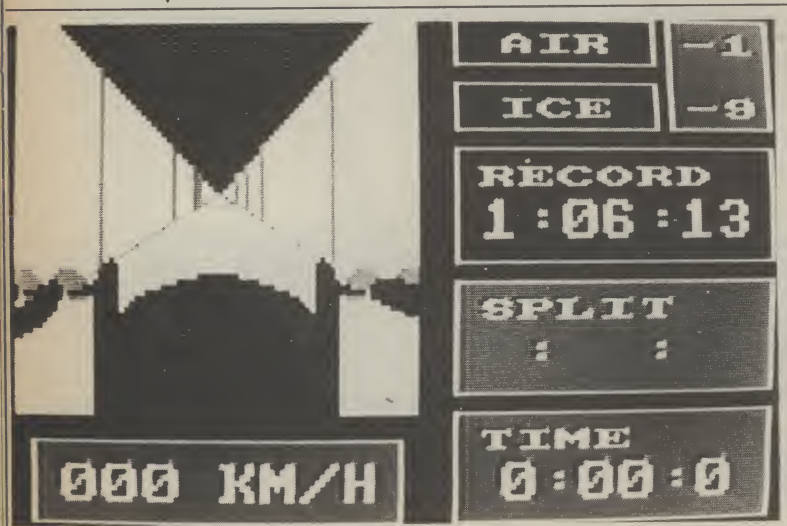
them. Crashing into the side walls, if it doesn't stop you altogether, will slow you down considerable. Outside the action window is displayed a speedo, a split time indicator which records your progress at the quarter, half, and three-quarter stage intervals, the track record and of course the current time. In the likely event of your cocking the whole thing up and attempting to finish on your bum, you can get a map showing exactly where on the course you copped it.

Once you become competent at getting down in one piece without the French, Swiss and Germans sniggering at your appallingly bad

The map will show you where you crashed.



Give the bob a good push to get going.



seconds, or 50 metres, at which time its a good idea to press the fire button and jump in. Ommision of this crucial part of the proceedings will result in the bobsleigh attempting the run without you. It's not very good at it.

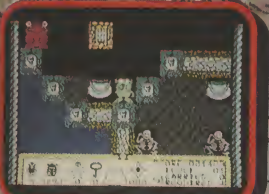
From here on down it's just a question of keeping the thing the right way up and pointing in the right direction, which is a lot more difficult than it sounds. The trick is to anticipate the bends and find the smoothest line possible though

time, the thing becomes a lot more enjoyable because you can then start accumulating sponsorship money, racing to win, and aiming for that Olympic gold. DI have done their homework and I've no doubt that all the details are in there, but for me that didn't make up for the disappointment of seeing the old 'bob standard' Cresta Run style display, I was expecting something new and this just didn't cut the ice.

Ken McMahon

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

6
Overall



Bono takes the skeletons to a cauldron



Bono's partner Fozzy restrains a monster

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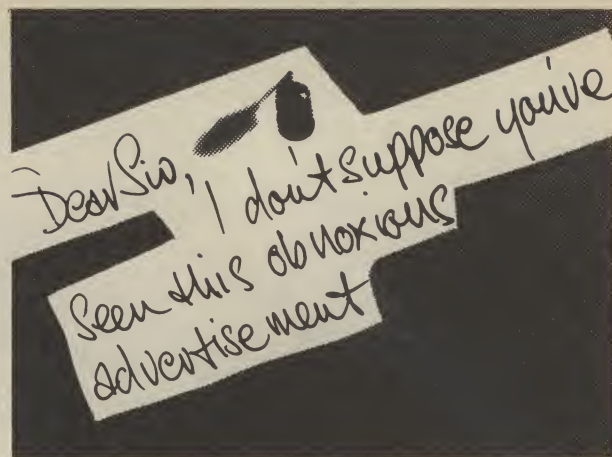
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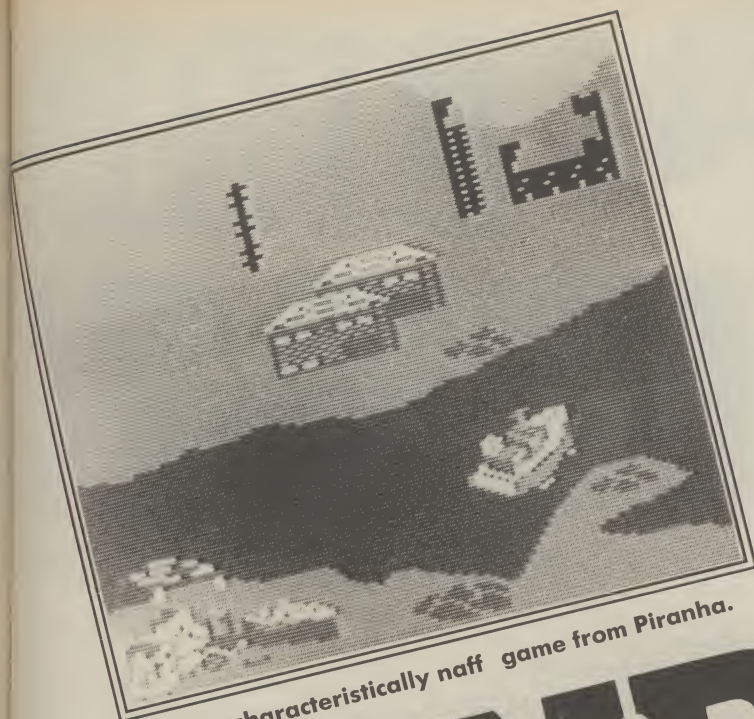
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Uncharacteristically naff game from Piranha.

GUNBOAT

64/128
Piranha
Price:
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Five Ways began producing software almost four years ago, effectively launching book publishers Macmillan into the computer games market with their sailing, rally driving and athletics simulations.

Their latest production, released on Macmillan's Piranha label, is a horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up that puts you in control of a heavily armed, super secret gunboat. The objective is to negotiate the enemy's maze-like inland waterways, and destroy four major naval bases.

Not surprisingly, your intrusion into enemy waters does not go unnoticed, and progress is hampered by a profusion of aggressive warships, helicopter gunships and shore batteries — all of which shoot to kill.

waterways.

The gunboat can rotate clockwise and anti-clockwise, and can move either forwards or backwards. You are armed with cannons, heat-seeking missiles, torpedoes and depth charges, all in limited supply. The fire button activates the cannons, whereas the other weapons are launched via the keyboard.

This arrangement is more often than not inconvenient to say the least — it's not much fun trying to manoeuvre the boat while launching missiles, torpedoes and depth charges, especially when the action hots up. Playing with keys only doesn't make the going any easier either.

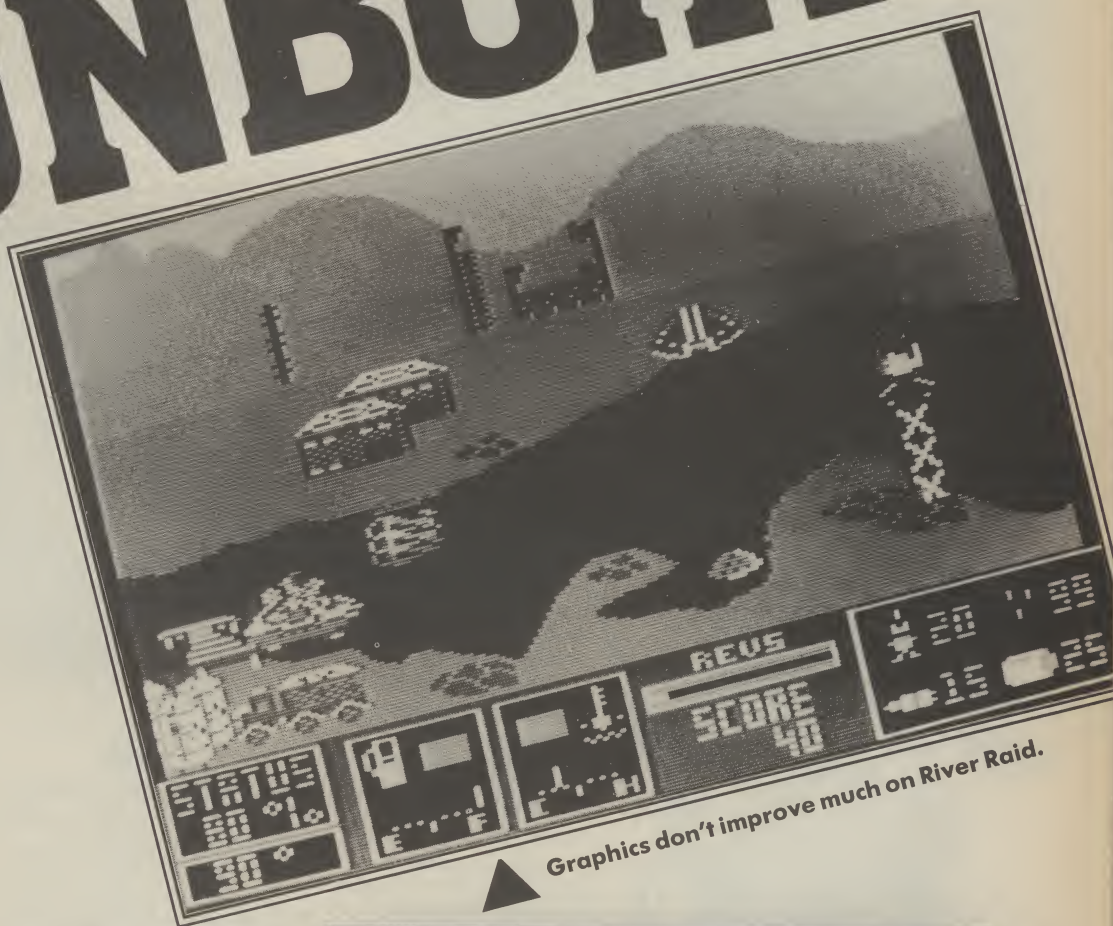
Control is sluggish and means that the enemy is invariably

presented with an easy target.

Fortunately, the action is predictable, with enemy craft appearing and firing at exactly the same positions each time you play.

Sound is sparse, simplistic and frequently irritating, and the graphics are on the whole bland. The scrolling is as smooth as sandpaper, with the screen juddering quite badly at times — especially when the boat stops to allow the scenery to catch up. Gunboat is a very dated product in ever respect, and sadly lacks the playability and polish of previous Piranha releases. Hopefully, their impending batch of licensed software won't suffer the same fate.

Gary Penn



Graphics don't improve much on River Raid.

A panel at the bottom of the screen displays the boat's fuel and ammunition levels, its speed and its engine condition. Damage is repaired and fuel and ammunition levels are replenished by docking at the enemy depots dotted about the

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4
Overall

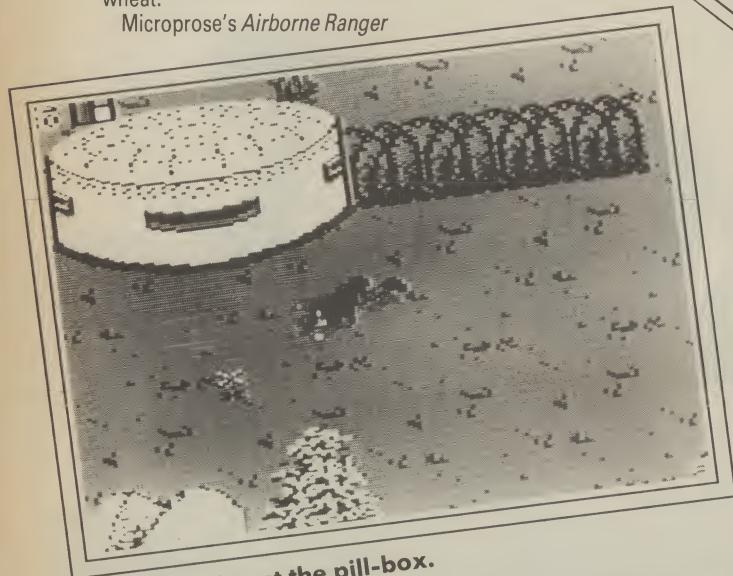
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It says here that to become an Airborne Ranger you must be able to climb the toughest mountains, survive for five days in the blazing heat of the desert and then undertake guerilla warfare in the jungle. Doesn't sound that tough to me, but I can eat three shredded wheat.

Microprose's *Airborne Ranger*



▲ Crawl past the pill-box.



isn't just a survival test but a series of missions designed to let you use both your zapping and your strategic skills. It's not one of those boring war games, nor is it an out and out blaster like *Commando*.

It's the best of both worlds, allowing you full control over your severely crew-cut soldier in a range of 3-D scrolling terrains, with the

emphasis on sharp thinking and fast reactions to get you through. There are 12 missions in all and you can play them either in practice mode or as a real veteran ranger.

The difference between the two is that in practice mode your score won't be registered on the Veteran Ranger Roster. As a veteran, if you complete a mission your soldier is saved to tape or disk for future use.

The 12 missions are graded in three stages of difficulty. Some are based in Arctic conditions, some in the desert and the rest in temperate zones. You can choose from simple missions like capturing an enemy officer or disabling an enemy

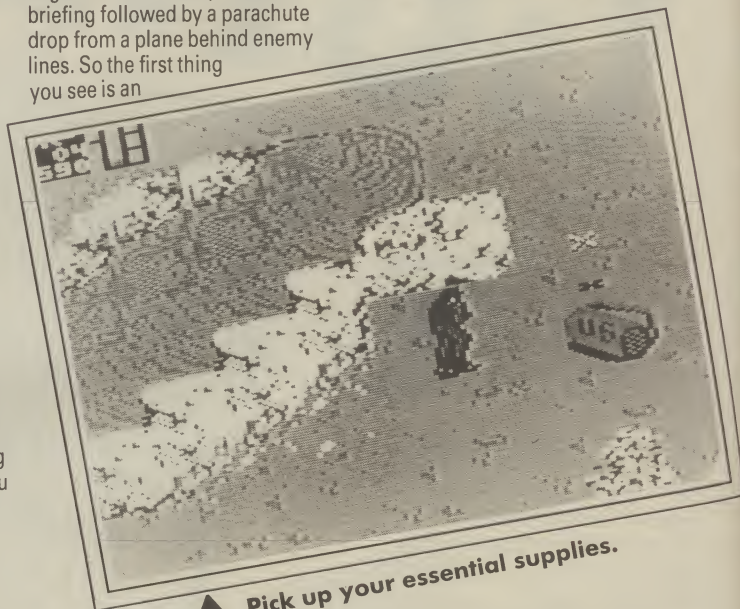
aircraft to slightly trickier missions like liberating a POW camp or setting up a delayed sabotage.

More advanced players will go for campaign mode in which you complete all 12 missions in a predetermined order. Come through on one of these and you'll need scaffolding on your jacket to hold up the medals.

Whatever the mission, you always begin it the same way, with a briefing followed by a parachute drop from a plane behind enemy lines. So the first thing you see is an

evenly along the route. They're essential for success because they provide not only extra weapons but first-aid.

Whether you're in the Arctic, the desert or anywhere else for that matter, the terrain remains pretty much the same, consisting of trenches, minefields, machine-gun posts, watery bits and barbed wire. Pressing a key brings up a map that shows your position in a wider area.



▲ Pick up your essential supplies.

aerial view of the terrain scrolling upwards as the plane flies over. You must eject three supply pods wherever you think is the best place for them and then jump out when the green light goes. The parachute is joystick controlled so you try not to steer it onto a minefield — bad start.

You always land at the bottom end of the terrain. Since, in most cases, the object behind your mission is at the top end it makes sense to space out your supply pods

It's worth looking at the map, it's the only way you'll know whether or not you're in a minefield. Well, not quite, the other way you'll know is when you get blown up.

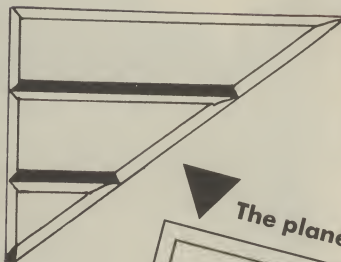
Now for the animation. This is pretty neat. Your soldier is fairly large, carries a back-pack and gun, and will move in any direction. He

BORNE RANGER

4TH AIRBORNE
RANGER Co.

will do his duty and try to make a break for it whilst you're busy blasting his mates. But it's not all subtlety. Some missions involve as much blasting as possible and your grenades and missiles will come in handy here for mass destruction. By the way, if you let fly with a missile whilst crouching in a trench, you blow yourself up — and serves you right.

If and when you accomplish a mission, you can summon up your reconnaissance plane to come and get you out. Having done that, you must make your way to the pickup



The plane that drops you behind the enemy lines.

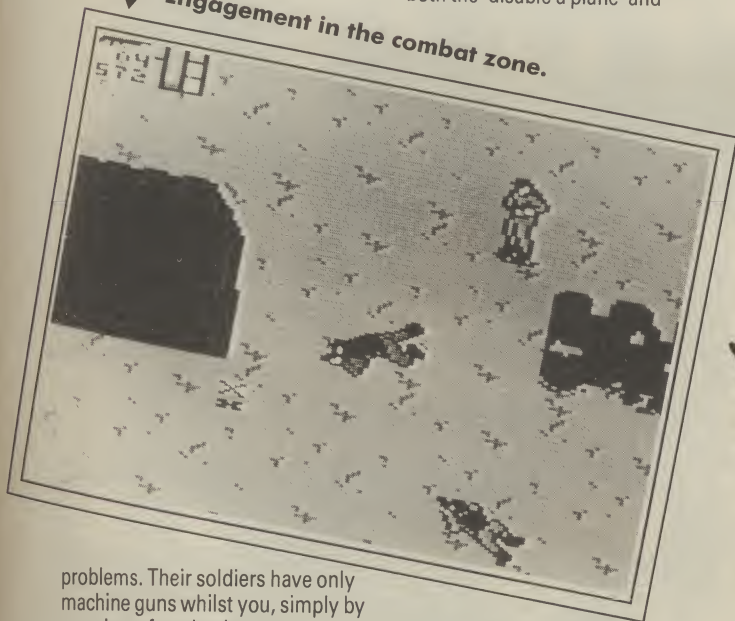
can run, walk, crouch down and wriggle around on his stomach using his knees and elbows to move. The wriggling movements are pretty classy. But running is much less so. In fact, it's more a scamper. How can the gooks take you seriously when you do a spritely skip up to their machine-gun post?

But the enemy has its own

and there's a gunsight constantly hovering in front of him whichever way he turns. So to fire at the enemy, you merely line up the gunsight and press fire.

Now for the tactical stuff. All the missions are difficult and they need thinking out if you're to get back alive. The chunky manual explains each mission and gives a few hints to get you started. For example, in both the 'disable a plane' and

Engagement in the combat zone.



problems. Their soldiers have only machine guns whilst you, simply by pressing a function key, can summon up a whole armoury: knife, grenade, missile or your trusty carbine. To add to their problems, the gooks have this bad habit of stamping their feet, so their boots tell you they're around before you even see them.

Your man is joystick controlled

'liberate prisoners' missions it's wise not to send the enemy a postcard telling them you're there.

Blasting your way through simply results in the plane you're after taking off (you hear its engines as it makes a getaway) or the prisoners being moved out to a different spot. So here, the trenches and the knife come in handy. Crawl along inside the trenches and the gooks won't see you, and if they do the knife disposes of them soundlessly.

Similarly, in the 'capture an enemy officer' mission, the bloke



point. Even if you're captured, there's still hope because one of your buddies might get to rescue you in the POW mission.

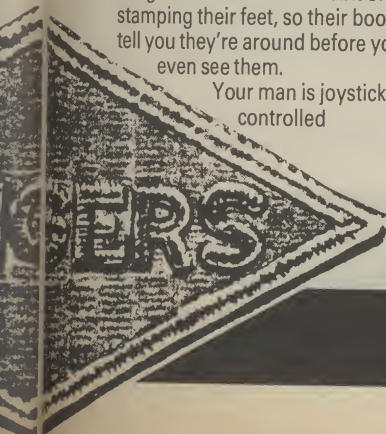
I enjoyed *Airborne Ranger*. Microprose have obviously worked hard on it, both in programming and presentation — so they should, for the price. The handbook is of the usual high standard and there's a keyboard overlay for easy reference to the various key controls.

My only complaint is that the terrain graphics could have been better and more varied. The enemy installations look pretty much the same on all three of the terrains. More variety might have made this a very good game. As it is, it's still very enjoyable and a challenge as tough as you'll get anywhere.

Bohdan Buciak

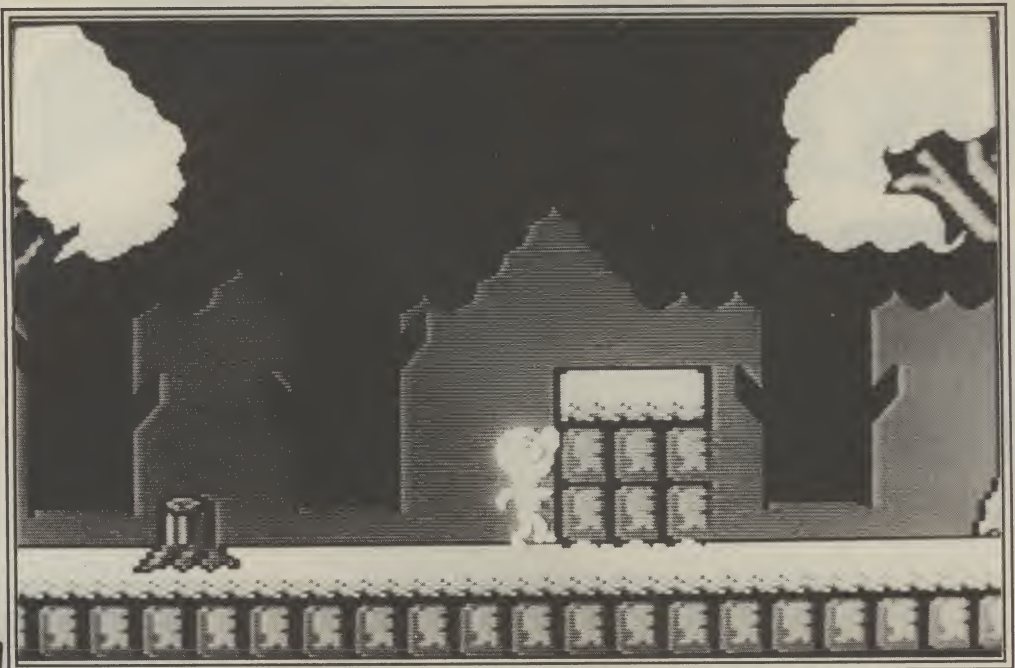
Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

8
Overall



64/128
Imagine
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£9.95/
cassette

Nice artwork, nice game, excellent label — things could hardly have looked more promising for *Athena* at first glance. 'Great!' thought I. 'At last I can do a really banal, enthusiastic review for CU — you know, the kind that would get you Christmas cards from software houses. Think again



Athena "The blood of a ZX81 runs through her sprite".

Athena

... *Athena* is simply one of the worst games I've seen since *Macsen* popped its clogs (remember *Treasure Hunt*?) And having sat at it for two hours I can't help feeling that if new writers are still producing garbage like this AND getting it published, then 8-bit software is definitely dying or dead already.

The plot tells of a heroine, *Athena*, fighting her way through a strange land towards a showdown with the Dark Overlord. "The blood of a hundred Samurai runs through her veins" we are told — well, that's as may be, but unfortunately the blood of a ZX81 runs through her sprite, for *Athena* herself is a stupid-looking blur, apparently wearing a baseball cap, who seems to attack her foes with a selection of kitchen utensils! In fairness to Ocean, *Athena* is based on an arcade game by S.N.K. — easily one of the weakest and least original of the coin-op giants — but even so you would have thought they could let

loose a decent programmer on it.

The game scrolls 4-ways, apparently through 6 levels, with *Athena* having to leap over or destroy the variety of vague sprites which wobble towards her. Some appear to be worms, others are clearly meant to be ogres, all move in from the left or right in predictable patterns a la *Ghosts and Goblins*. Sometimes your path across the screen will be blocked by a wall, but this can be knocked down brick by brick and behind some bricks you will find by way of extra weapons, yes... more kitchen utensils. At the top of the screen is a strength indicator for your heroine and one for the particular weapon you are carrying. Obviously, certain weapons are necessary to destroy certain foes and discovering which is which seems to be the main point of the game. Only by defeating some of the more powerful foes can you progress to the next level.

Other details include an uninspiring soundtrack by Martin Galway, no sound effects to speak of

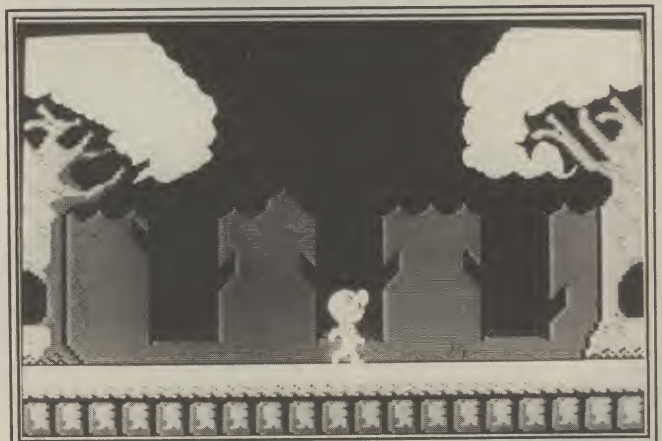
and background graphics like you used to draw with a big wax crayon when you were five. Need I say more?

I'm sorry I can't say anything

complimentary about this one, because in the past *Imagine* have released some excellent products.

Tina Milan

Tough talking Tina "can't say anything complimentary about this one".



Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4
Overall

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[†]Home/Small Business Category of the British Microcomputing Awards.



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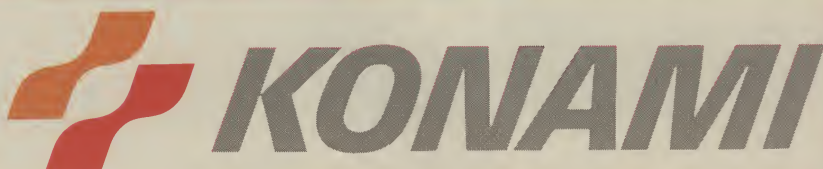
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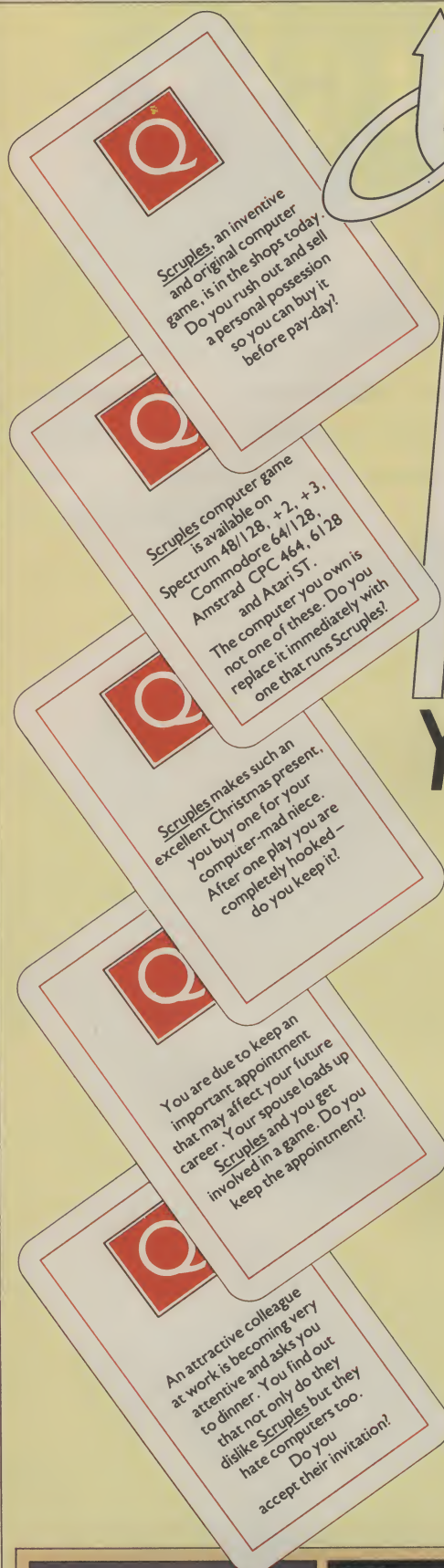
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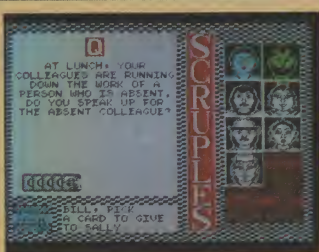
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transfers 10% of the country's industry to another country. If the government of the supplied country is neutral it will cause a swing in favour to you. Industry also effects the speed at which your armies grow.

The **Enforce** icon is next, and when selected transfers all your

you have **Political** icon that supplies 12.5% of the country's political strength to a neutral country. The purpose of which is to influence the neutral country in to joining your regime. The way that system works is all the political strength supplied is added up and the side with the highest value obtains a swing in

though is where you can have the countries randomly assigned to the East and West.

If you have the upper hand in the game the computer starts to either get desperate and do pointless things, or it just seems to lay down and die. For an old game **Power Struggle** looks good and it plays well too. If you have ever played *Balance of Power* on the ST or the Amiga and enjoyed it, you should like this too.

Although along the same lines as the excellent *BoP* it is in no way the same game. While initially absorbing *Power Struggle* begins to wear thin, as can be expected with this sort of limited option game. Not so much a

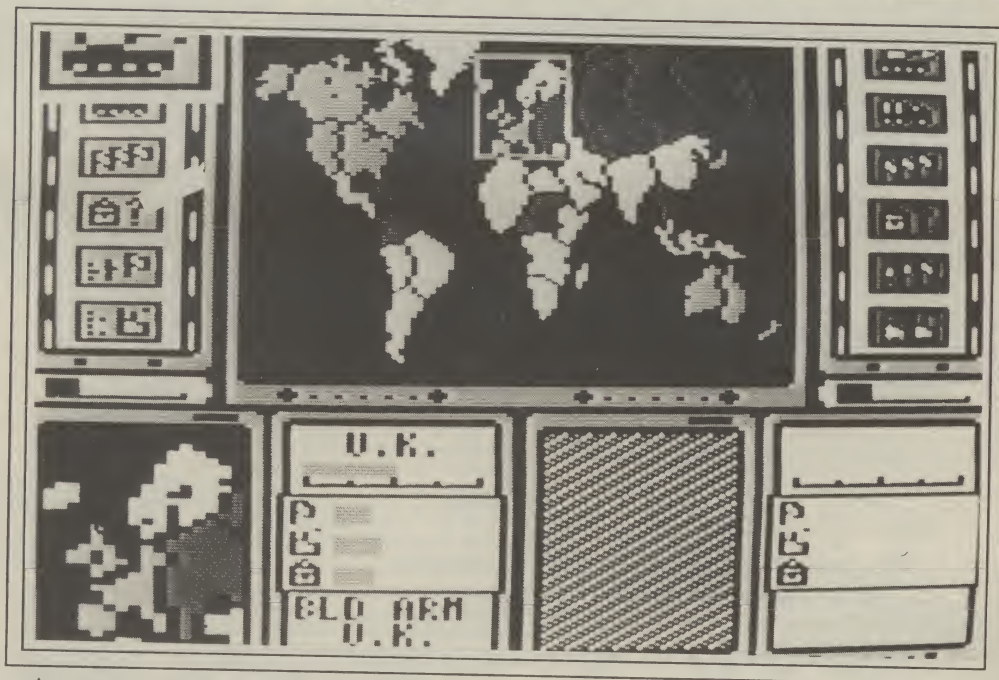
POWER STRUGGLE

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to control all the Communist countries in the world? Or all the countries loyal to Ronnie and the Constitution? You have? Well, *Power Struggle* lets you do just this. You can either be in charge of the Eastern bloc and its allies or NATO. Whichever you feel most comfortable with. You can pit your wits against a computer controlled opponent or fight it out with a mate, both jostling for complete world domination.

The entire game is played on a single screen. With little less than half being taken up by a world map. At the side of the screen are the icons available to you and the enemy, with information and command boxes taking up the remaining half. On the map is a command cursor with which you can have hours of fun by moving it aimlessly around. You can, for comic relief put it over a country of your choice and press fire. A blow up of the country and the surrounding area will appear in the command box along with a small cursor to accurately select the country. The vital statistic of the country will then be shown up in the information box, telling you its world alignment (East or West) military strength, industrial power, political influence and current status. By pressing the fire button twice you gain entry to the table of icons.

The **attack** icon is pretty obvious, it causes all your military resources to start hammering away at a neighbouring country of your choice, until their military strength (or yours) is depleted, then your government can claim the country or they might counter-attack against you.

The next icon on the list is the **supply** icon, which, when selected,



East meets West in Power Struggle

armies to a next door neighbour. This leaves your country defenceless so this option is only wise if you are well protected with a buffer zone of other countries. Then

favour from the neutral one. The **Build Army** icon transfers 12.5% of industrial strength to the military. And lastly **Build Factories** speaks for itself. Probably the best feature

war game more a form of strategy, rather than a game that requires real tactics and thing-a-head planning skill.

But quids in and five of them in all, *Power Struggle* totals up to a cheap relief from standard games. The sort of thing you could break out at wet weekends when you feel like nothing better to do. But without splitting hairs you either like it or don't, I did. Ideal for power hungry Communist meglomaniacs or plain strategy freaks.

Mark Patterson

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

6
Overall

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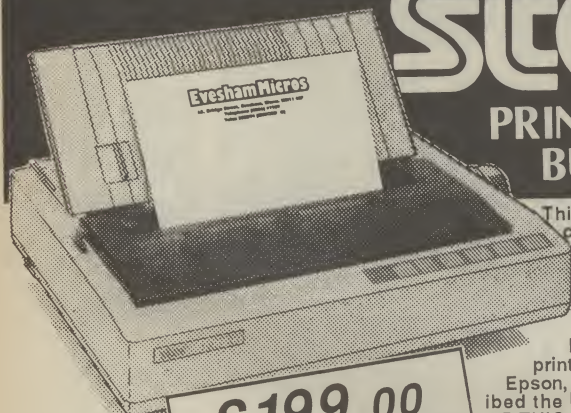
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Zig Zag



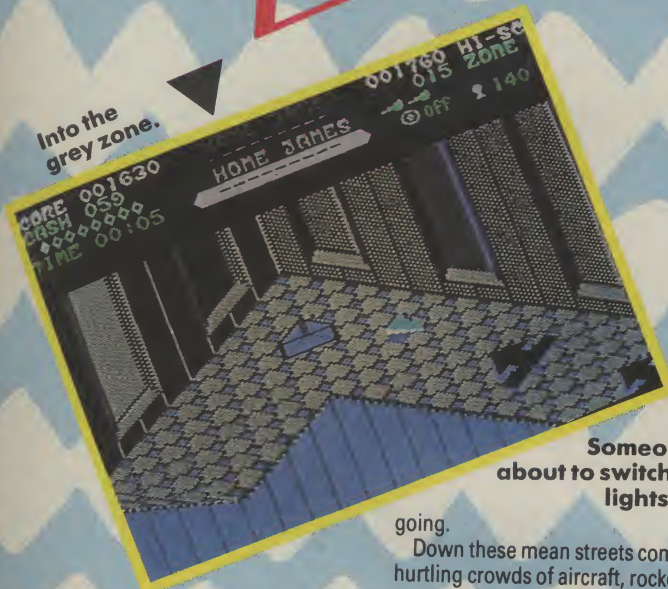
TC comes up with the goods.

destruction you can take time off and go shopping. Scattered throughout the city are shopping precincts where, provided you've got sufficient spondulicks, you can buy extra weaponry, extra lives, shields, maps, infra-red vision for the unlit zones, and x-ray vision which temporarily removes all buildings.

Most useful of all are the 'raisers' which levitate all nasties off the ground, allowing you to ricochet around the streets without being molested.

There's enough here to keep most gamers happy for yonks, but Crowther and Bishop haven't

64/128
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Into the grey zone.

Someone's about to switch the lights off.

To describe a game as 'the latest blockbuster from Tony Crowther' is hardly a recommendation, as owners of *Challenge of the Gobots* and *William Wobbler* will testify. Our Tony has been responsible for more than his fair share of turkeys over the years, but he's also got the ability to occasionally deliver the goods and take everybody by surprise.

Zig Zag is, without qualification, the goods. Tony has teamed up with David Bishop to produce one of the most sophisticated hunt 'n' kill maze games that you're ever likely to see on the 64, with smooth action, flawless animation, solid 3D scenery and a nice line in clanky metallic sound effects.

The game has no plot at all — not unless you'd describe flying down corridors blasting away at everything which moves as a plot. The action takes place entirely within a huge city of hi-rise blocks and intersecting streets, picked out in perspective 3D and pastel shades which change to signify the different city zones. The streets widen and narrow, go up and down ramps, and as you fly down them the intervening buildings disappear, allowing you to see where you're

going.

Down these mean streets come hurtling crowds of aircraft, rockets, torpedoes and bug-eyed hoppers and generally they don't look too friendly. So kill them.

Hidden somewhere amongst the 32 zones and 1380 screens of the city are the Eight Crystals of Zog, and it won't surprise you to learn that you've got to find all eight before you can once again sleep easy at nights. If you're one of the first five to finish the game, Mirrorsoft will give you a ghetto-blasters autographed by young Tone himself. Despite that, the game is still worth playing.

What makes *Zig Zag* different from all the other shoot-the-aliens-pick-up-the-crystals games, besides the polish of its presentation, is the ingenious way in which you travel round the maze.

Your dinky little delta-wing can only fly up and down, and sidestep to left and right. It can't turn corners. Which is a bit of a problem in a city composed entirely of streets at right angles. But there are prisms at ground level at some junctions, and if you hit these at the correct angle of incidence they'll send you zooming off at 90° until you hit the next prism, if there is one.

If you're flying too high or off-target, you miss the prisms altogether, and you keep travelling



in a straight line until either you bounce off a wall or you get blown to bits by the enemy.

The whole thing sounds a bit like a physics lesson, and takes some getting used to. For the first 30 minutes or so you'll loathe it. Hopefully, though, things will suddenly click, and instead of rocketing all over the place like the Dow Jones Index, you can get on with the serious business of exploring and killing.

Actually, killing is in this instance not totally gratuitous. The more beasts and craft you destroy, the better your credit rating is at the bank, so that after a spree of

stopped there. As well as the usual toggle options for music and sound effects, there is also a reverse joystick mode, enabling your stick to operate like an aircraft joystick (push forward to descend), and a Brain Teaser mode. In this all the hunting and zapping goes on as before but in addition you've also got to solve horrible logic problems, involving the use of flashing targets which open and close streets, and remove and replace prisms. And then there are the time locks...

One of the most inventive variants on a well-worn theme, *Zig Zag* is like a breath of fresh air.

Bill Scolding

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

8
Overall

F.L.P. Bond = 87 =

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I looked *Tetris* up in the dictionary and there's no such word. Sounds authentic though doesn't it? (Derived from something to do with four-sided shapes no doubt). Could be a goldfish or even a disease that makes your hair fall out. In fact it's none of those things, but, as you probably guessed, a game. I can honestly say it is really weird and I haven't seen anything like it for

a long time if ever.

Don't be put off by this, but the nearest thing to this that comes to mind is the kind of thing you used to get in the program listings at the back of C.U. I'm not saying it's bad, I quite liked it, it's just that it's based on an amazingly simple idea and it looks, in the words of the programmer, "nothing mega".

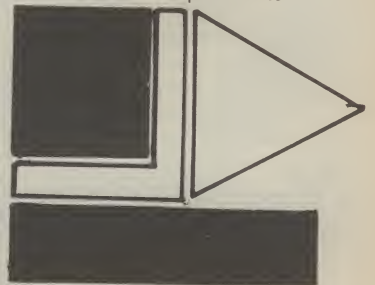
So, what's it all about? Shapes that's what. Square shapes, rectangles, T shapes, L shapes and shapes that look like two staggered

Regrettably (as this would make life a lot easier) the shapes can not be flipped.

If you can get the shapes to fit so snugly that they form a complete horizontal line from one side to the other, the line disappears and everything above it moves down. The object is to make the game last as long as possible, if not forever, by making all the shapes fit together, getting lots of lines and lots of points.

That's really all there is to it. This game was obviously written by someone with a real obsession for geometry. The game gets more and more difficult as time goes on and the bricks pile up. As the floor reaches the ceiling, so to speak, you have less time to think about where you're going to dump the things. There are a few things to help you out here. One is the panic button which freezes everything by pushing the joystick up. A bit annoying that you have to hit the space bar to

TETRIS



unfreeze. The other thing to look out for is the 'what's coming next' indicator which tells you what's coming next. Handy.

It sounds simple and it is. It could have been written in Basic and probably was. One thing's certain, it's a lot better than it sounds. The music, which lasts for a full 25 mins is pretty good and I'd guess that more work went into the loading screen than the game itself.

Two criticisms, one fairly minor, the other one pretty serious news. The blocks scroll down a character space at a time which is pretty rough and amateurish looking, why no pixel scroll? The heavy duty moan is that this is very entertaining for fifteen minutes, but when you've seen all there is to see there's, er, nothing left to see. Or to put it another way, the fun, if that's the word for it, is very short lived.

Ken McMahon



bricks, if you get my drift. These shapes are all different colours, but as far as the game is concerned that's largely irrelevant. What is relevant is that there's this rectangular window in the middle of the screen.

The shapes fall, one at a time from the top of the window to the bottom.

Sometimes when the shapes fall they slot into each other ("tessellate" is the word for it I think - ask your maths teacher) but most times they don't. You can, of course increase the chances for this happening by moving the shapes to the left or right and by rotating them with a quick press of the fire button.

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

5
Overall

64/128

Bulldog
Software

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Spore generators are all over the place, confined by the yellow beams.

Your job is to zap the spores and their generators, what else? To do that you have to break the beams to get through. This is done either by a combination of zapping the square at either end, which turns the energy off, or by zapping the mirror that deflects the beam so that it travels a different way.

As soon as you open up a section,

around the lab. Each barrel picked up earns you 100 more points. There's also the occasional flask which gives you more energy.

The only disappointing thing about *Spore* are the graphics. The scene looks nothing like the inside of a lab. What you get is a mass of squares, the spores being the ones that flash. And it's the same for each level.

If you manage to complete all the levels in *Spore*, the programmers have included a function that lets you design your own levels.

With its DIY level designer, *Spore* has got to be good value. This type of game may be a little dated now but they still can't be beaten for sheer manic blasting. Now where did I put that Dettol?

Bohdan Buciak

SPORE

Eurgh! Nasty scenario this: infected laboratory, genetically altered killer spores, pesticides.

Despite risk of terminal infection, *Spore* is a pretty good game. It resembles those Gauntlet-type games in which generators pump out hordes of nasties that swarm around. In this case, the nasties are mutant spores.

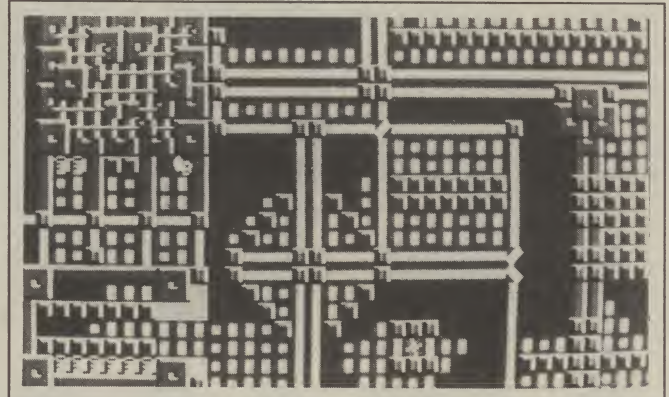
The scene is the inside of an infected laboratory. This is divided up into sections by flashing yellow barriers. Barriers are laser beams that travel between two pale squares. Some of the beams are deflected at rightangles by mirrors.

the spores start swarming. So you get ready for some manic blasting to get rid of them. The best way is to zap the beam, make a quick retreat and then blast them as they come at you. Being pretty dumb spores, they all travel in a straight line so it's easy to get rid of them quickly if you're in the right position. Between waves of spores, you blast the generators.

Any spores that hit you will drain a little energy, which is displayed at the bottom of the screen. Run out of energy and you're terminally contaminated – and your friends will no longer want to know you.

Also on each level there are the usual items to pick up. The antidote for the spores is in barrels dotted

Bacteriological blasting.



Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

7
Overall

64/128

Atlantis

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There has been a nuclear mishap, there are now thousands of people trapped in an underground hibernation

dome. You are in control of three droids whose task it is to transport these lost souls to safety. Each droid has its own special ability. You use them one at a time, toggling control between the three by simply pressing the firebutton.

Droid One is the tunneller who digs through earth, whilst Droid Two teleports the survivors to safety. Droid Three pushes boulders, but

only one at a time. Now for the nasties, there are a few 'guardian' droids knocking around who will take a life if they bump into you. Apart from them, there's only the boulders to contend with.

The tunneller Droid is particularly susceptible to boulders. If it tunnels away at a chunk of earth beneath a

There are elements of strategy in *Survivors*. It's best to try to keep the three droids together as opposed to just going careering off with one, since the skills of the other two will come in useful at various stages.

So it doesn't sound too bad so far? But I haven't mentioned the graphics yet. These are of the 'block' variety – you know, the stuff that looks as though it was programmed in Basic. Scrolling is equally bad. It's not really a scroll but a judder.

Admittedly the three droids are graphically more acceptable. At least they have moving parts. The earth mover has claws that open and shut and the boulder pusher stamps its feet, waves its arms and nods its head – wacky mover.

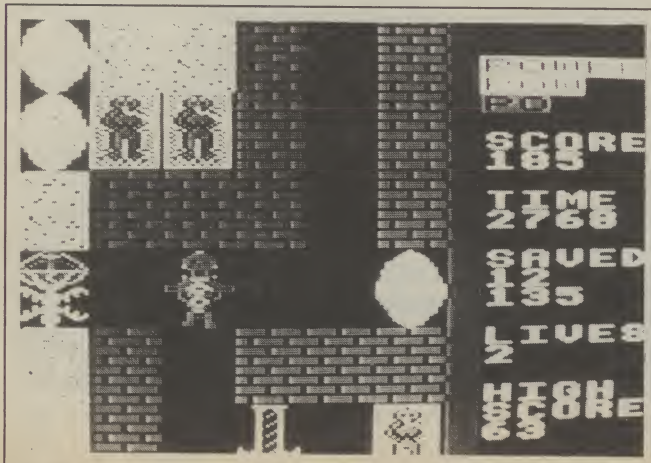
And lastly sound. There isn't any, except for a different pitch of beep when you transfer control between droids and a constant ticking sound as the seconds pass.

I can't say I enjoyed *Survivors*. There's really nothing to commend it, owing to its severe lack of anything approaching originality.

Bohdan Buciak

SURVIVORS

The three droids pose for the picture



boulder, the offending item is likely to fall on its head. This, to me, was more fun than transporting boring old survivors. With great skill, you can get your tunneler droid completely surrounded by boulders, leaving it totally useless.

The game has seven levels, each one having both a time limit and a specific amount of survivors to rescue. So in level one, you get 3,000 seconds (just under an hour, yawn) to rescue 135 people. Level two? Well, I couldn't manage to stay awake for it.

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

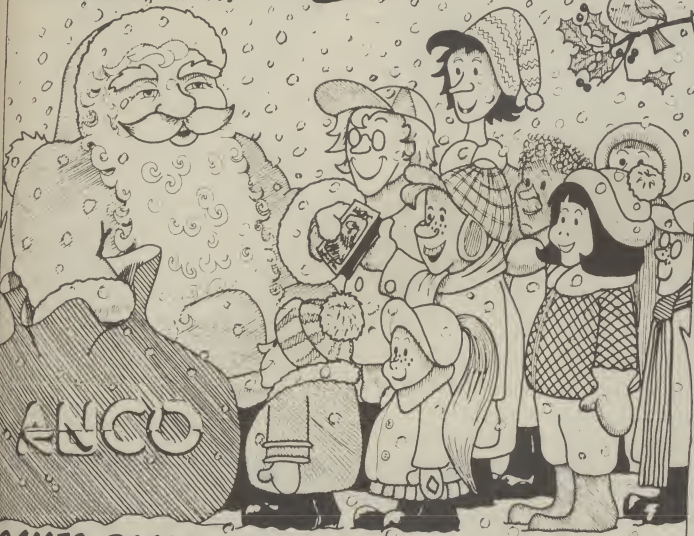
3
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FAR FROM HOME -



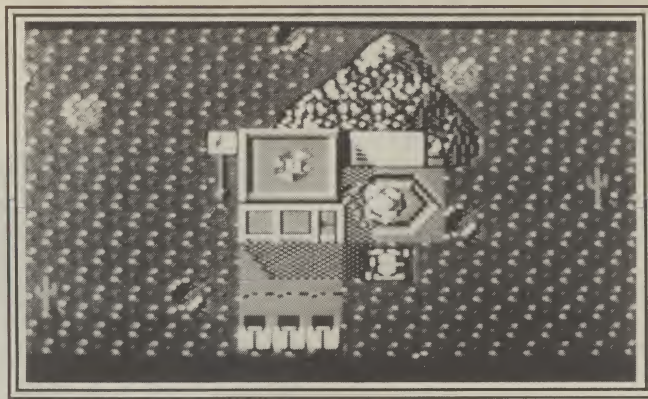
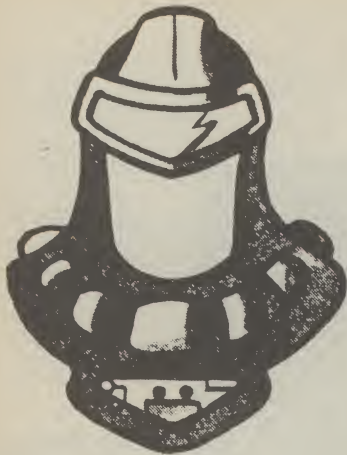
FAR FROM...

Hunter's MOON

BY MARTIN WALKER

SOON! CBM 64/128





▲ Boulder Hill — is that a key section or a cactus?



64/128

Gremlin Graphics

Price £9.99 cass/£14.99 disk.

You've read the comic, seen the TV show, worn the pyjamas, slept in the sheets, jogged in the track suit, sat in the bean bag wearing the slippers; now you can play the computer game.

Believe it or not, if you're a big fan of the Mobile Armoured Strike

less, is where the comic ends and the game begins.

In the role of Matt Trakker, you must travel through the vortex in Thunderhawk and rescue the stranded MASK Agents. There are four locations in time and space and with the exception of the first —

telling you who he is. The job's not finished yet though, before you can head for the vortex you must pick up your colleague's MASK, only then can you head for the vortex and the next level.

The playing area is depicted in the familiar aerial fashion and scrolls one of four ways whenever Thunderhawk reaches the edge of the screen. Thunderhawk itself is nicely animated with a sort of momentum which makes it continue

trees, more boulders (which can be shoved out of the way), volcanoes, dinosaurs, snapping turtles and a pterodactyl in place of Switchblade. Level 3 — far future — features black holes UFOs and the like, and the last level, Venom base, has some real mean stuff like snakes, acid and giant spiders. On the last level you must not only collect the last two agents and their MASKs, but completely destroy the Venom base before returning to the vortex.

What with all this nastiness floating around you'd expect to be able to defend yourself and fight back, and Thunderhawk is well equipped with dual cannons to blast anything minor out of the way. Occasionally your path will be blocked by impassable rocky terrain, trees or whatever. This situation can easily be remedied by the use of the bombs which can be found lying in similar containers to MASKs, scanners, keys and so on. The bombs are on a short fuse and have the added advantage taking out any enemy tanks, dinosaurs, or whatever happens to be passing. That includes you, so remember to stand well back after lighting the blue touchpaper.

If you do get badly damaged, whether it's your own fault or not, the damage meter at the bottom of the screen will show you the extent of the bad news. Providing you can find a repair kit lying around it shouldn't turn into a desperate problem. Like everything else though, it's a good idea to make a mental note of where these things are if you pass them by without needing them.

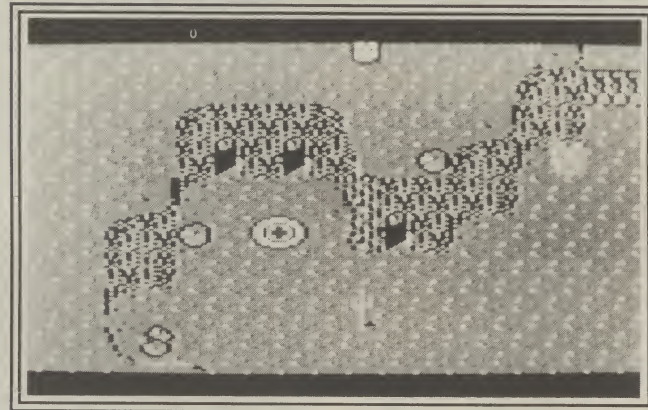
So often licensed games of this sort are just a name, a lot of cash up front to some merchandising outfit and a badly copied picture of the real thing on the cassette inlay. It's nice to see that Gremlin haven't let that attitude get in the way of their ability to consistently produce good games. So, even if you're not a slipper-slinging, watch-wearing MASK fan reserve a space in your stocking for it.

Ken McMahon

MASK

Command, you can actually get hold of all that gear and more, everything from MASK toothpaste to MASK dog biscuits. Whether you're an avid MASK collector, or you just tune in to the programme at weekends and read the comic, you'll find that Gremlin's game has more in common with MASK than most of the merchandise knocking around.

As well as the software there's a single page comic which explains the plot pretty well. Matt Trakker is on his way back to Boulder Hill when he is ambushed by Venom. Mayhem drops a bomb which opens up a time vortex and Floyd Malloy throws all the MASK agents into it. The two then hang around waiting for Trakker to show up in Thunderhawk. Molloy attempts to destroy Thunderhawk, but succeeds only in badly damaging it. This, more or



▲ MASK — not just for Matt-maniacs.

Boulder Hill, where you pick up Bruce Sato — there are two agents to be rescued in each. The procedure for this is straightforward, but less than easy. First you must locate the whereabouts of the agent and to do this you must first locate his personal scanner. Obtaining the scanner is not the end of your problems though.

Once picked up, the scanner must be activated, and to do that you will need all four pieces of the security key. Pieces of key can be found all over the place, but only four will assemble to form the letter which, when pressed will unlock the scanner mechanism. Then eight arrows at the bottom of the screen point you in the right direction and you should have no trouble picking up the stranded agent. When you've found him a status sheet pops up

in motion for a few seconds after you've let go of the joystick.

The landscape features provide all sorts of obstacles and dangers which vary, depending on the level. Boulder Hill has, well, boulders, a railway line, very unfriendly jeeps and tanks and Switchblade the super intelligent helicopter bomber. It's a desert landscape which makes the game at first sight look very very much in the *Rambo/Who Dares Wins/Commando* genre (which it isn't). Moving onto pre-historic times you are confronted with palm



Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

7
Overall

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PHM Pegasus is a patrol Hydrofoil Missile craft simulation. The hydrofoil is the Jetship of the age by all accounts. According to the blurb it's "so agile, enemy radar mistakes it for a low flying helicopter, so fast, the enemy has only minutes to react." That, of course, depends very much on who's driving the thing. To begin with, I think the enemy were somewhat surprised to find they had hours to react, but the situation didn't last long.

Pegasus is not the kind of simulation that pops up an enemy for you to shoot and destroy and then obliges with another and another and another until you get

bored into trying more exciting things like capsizing your own ship or firing on innocent bystanders. Instead Pegasus offers you eight missions based on 'real-life' scenarios, each of which tests your ability to command and control the hydrofoil's weapons and navigation systems.

The first two scenarios are in fact for training purposes and there's not really any point in going for the more ambitious and exciting missions until you've become accomplished at these. Battle training introduces ten enemy ships into your stretch of water and you have to blow them out of it. The ships appear one at a time so you can just about keep calm, think through what you are doing, and become a really efficient weapon of destruction.

Pegasus operates on two screens, the bridge, where all the action takes place and the operations map, where you can survey a wide area (it takes in continents) and set several courses on the auto pilot. Auxiliary forces can also be controlled from the operations map. On certain missions you can make use of two surveillance helicopters. You simply

moving to the bridge and taking joystick control overrides the autopilot.

The bridge is where it all happens, of course. The first contact you will have with enemy ships is when they show up on your radar which has a 40 mile range. For action at close quarters the radar range can be reduced in steps down to 2.5 miles. There are a number of things you can do when you spot an enemy ship, all of which either directly or indirectly involve blowing it out of the water. First it might be an idea to discover what it is and how dangerous it is, which you can do with the 'ship spotters' guide in the centre pages of the manual (which incidentally is appalling—half of mine was missing).

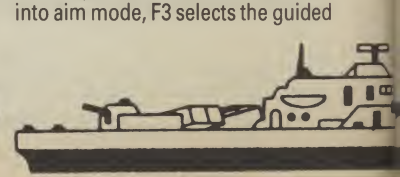
There are two ways to blow ships up. The easy way is to let rip with a guided missile and forget all about them. On the bridge there are two



Checking out the scene around Sicily.

set their destination with the cross-wire cursor, set their speed and they get on with it all by themselves. If they spot anything at all it shows as a radar blip on the map. Autopilot can also be set for the hydrofoil, but

modes; manoeuvre and aiming. Manoeuvre means steering (i.e. you can turn left/right, and speed up/slow down). You can also "target" an enemy ship which brings up a closer view in the binoculars at the top of the screen. At this point, pressing the space bar takes you into aim mode, F3 selects the guided



missile and I'm sure I don't have to tell you what the fire button does. Guided missiles can take up to about a minute to reach the target depending on its range, but they're pretty reliable.

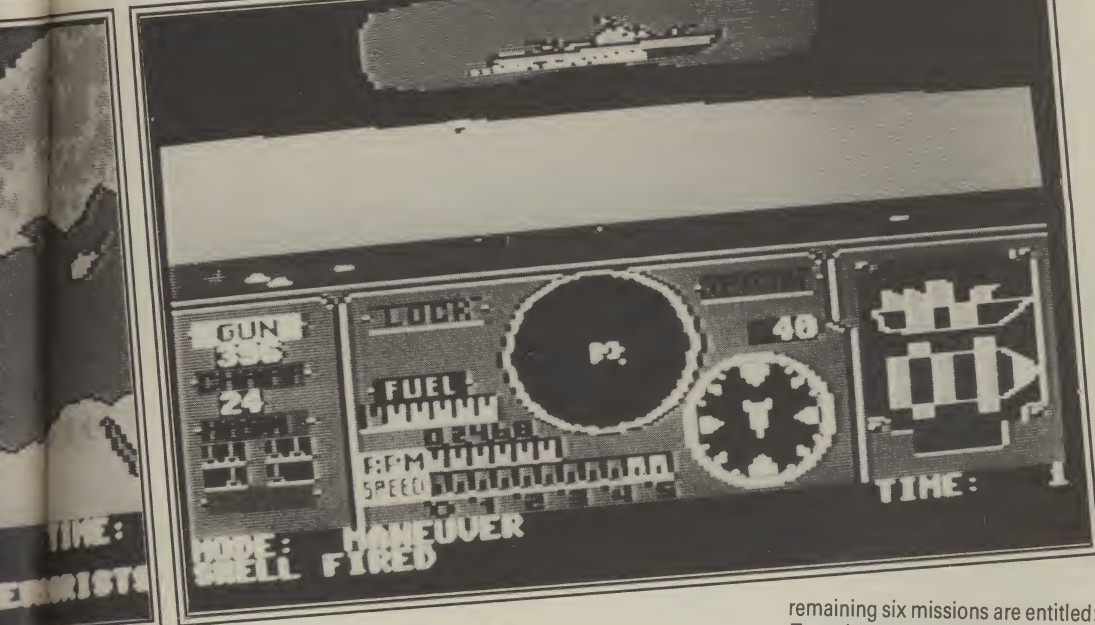
Smaller patrol boats and ships at close range can be taken out with the 76mm cannon. Same procedure as with the missiles, only this time press F1 for the gun before letting rip. An aim corrector flashes to show where your last shot was wide of the mark so that you can correct accordingly. You have a lot more shells than missiles, so you can really go mad with these.

Of course the enemy doesn't just sit there waiting to be blown up, it (it helps if you try not to think of them as people) fires at you. With shells all you can do is try and dodge, missiles are more fun altogether. A



▲ Flush those Commie's outa Cuba.

PUS



▲ View from the bridge.

'lock' indicator tells you when one is on its way in. The procedure is to wait until it is about a mile away, launch the chaff (a sort of mixture of Bacofoil, old Kit Kat wrappers and empty lager cans which fools the enemy radar and deflects missiles) and belt off at right angles. Nine times out of ten you can get away with it, but if you do get hit, damage indicators like the ones you get on

the new Fiat Uno dashboard show you what's out of action.

When you get reasonably good at this you can move on to the graduation exercise, where all ten ships are gunning for you at once. This is good fun, the thing to do is blow them all to pieces as quick as you can. Providing you come up to scratch with the training this should really be no problem, then you can move on to the real thing. The

is all about.

For example, *Search for terrorists* involves tracking down and destroying two missile corvettes which have attacked an American missile base off the coast of Sicily. You have a Sparviero hydrofoil (armed with Exocets) and an AB212 helicopter to track them down. In all the missions scoring is based on several factors like completion of the main objective (which is not always complete annihilation—there are reconnaissance and escort missions), enemies destroyed and time remaining—there is a limit.

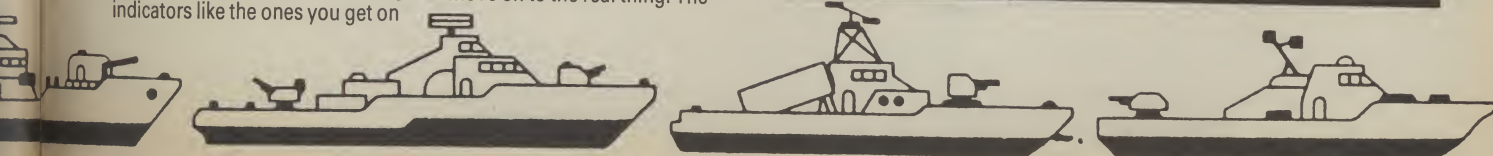
As a simulation *Pegasus* is certainly fascinating to play, it achieves just the right mix of complexity, realism and impressive graphics to keep you hooked. The fact that there is a final objective which must be achieved within the time limit if you are to succeed usually ensures a tension filled finale. The only think I have to say against it is that, inevitably, the old 'Uncle Ron keeping the free world safe from the gooks, Commies and fanatics' mentality is fairly prevalent. But then if you are that bothered you probably wouldn't be interested in war games for a lot of reasons. As war games go, *Pegasus* succeeds very well.

Ken McMahon

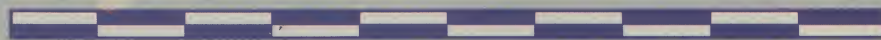
remaining six missions are entitled: *Terrorist attack*, *A better part of valour*, *Search for terrorists*, *Supply convoy*, *Surveillance mission*, and *JIHAD*, which should give you a good idea of what kind of thing this

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

7
Overall



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64/128
Firebird
Price:
£2.99

Sound as

Two new cheapo music packages from Firebird offer you a music editor and a drum machine for a total of a fiver. Is that too good to be true? Is that all it takes to be the next Pet Shop Boys? Ken McMahon gets up to get on down ...

The first thing I have to tell you is that judging by his picture on the cassette inlay Ubik is a complete nobhead. Unless you happen to think that looking like Michael J Fox with shoulder length hair, a headband, holes in the knees of your jeans, a denim waistcoat and studded leather wristbands is a really cool way to dress of course.

Anyway, Ubik's style, or rather his lack of it, hasn't really got very

much to do with *Ubik's Music*, which is a complex, but cheap synthesiser package. Before I get on to what it actually does I'd like to moan a lot about the instructions. As I said, it's a complex program and you'd expect pretty lengthy 'how to get a note out of this thing' type explanations. Now I appreciate Firebird trying to keep the cost down and all that, but trying to fit a 30 page manual on to the back of a

postage stamp just doesn't work. If you buy this make sure you've got a magnifying glass.

From what I could make out the program is an editor which enables you to create and sequence music using the SID chip's three channels. Commands are entered via a text editor which is split into three columns — one for each channel. You can create sequences by entering the notes to be played in order and there are several additional commands that can be used. *Voice*, for example, selects the voice definition to be used for subsequent notes, *Tempo* alters the playback speed. *Slide and Drum* you

could probably guess at. So the dedicated composer could build an entire piece assembled from individually created sequences in this manner.

Apart from the editor there is one other major part of the program and that is the live play/edit voices section. The screen here is divided into two sections, the top half being a keyboard the bottom displaying all the voice, waveform, filter and other SID chip parameters which affect the way notes will sound. The temptation is to do the obvious and have a good old bash on the keyboard, but while this is good fun it's vastly underusing the potential of the program. From this section you can also playback music created in the editor through any one, or all three channels. So you could, for example play your bass line through channel three and accompany it on the keyboard through channels one and two.

All the parameters in the lower half of the screen can be changed to alter the sound while it is playing — this part is quite good for experimentation, but it helps if you know what you're doing.

Ubik's Music has all of the filing operations you would expect to find on a more expensive program. You can load and save music, get a directory if you're using disk and even use the DOS commands from within the program. You can also compile completed compositions for use in Basic or machine code programs.

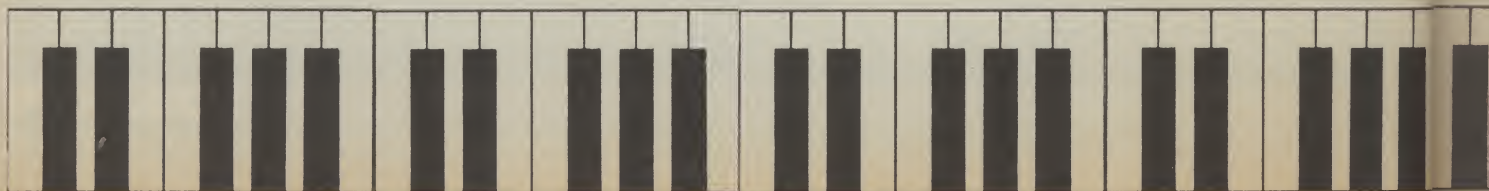
This really is a very extensive sound/music editor and there's no doubt that at three quid you're getting a lot for your money. All the same I'd advise against buying it if you just want to bash around on the keyboard and have a bit of a laugh creating special effects — pick a synth package that's easier to understand. *User Friendly* is one thing this isn't. It looks like it may have developed into a commercial program out of something the author wrote for his own use. As such to get the most out of it you will need to have at least a rudimentary knowledge of the workings of the SID chip.

UBIK'S MUSIC

CHANNEL 1				CHANNEL 2				CHANNEL 3			
2	3	5	6	7	9	0	-	£	HOM	VCLH	
TRK	CHDH	FHGH	AH	CHDH	FHGH	AH	CHDH	FHGH	AH	VCLH	
C-2										02	
C-2										00	
C-2										01	
C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Q	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P	C	* ↑ DEL
VOICE NUMBER: 02											
ATT: 2		DEC: D		SUS: B		REL: 9					
PUL WID: 400		GATEON: NPSTRSG		OFF: NPSTRSG							
EFFECTS: 3210		DELAY: 00		REP RATE: 00							
EFFECTS NOTE: C-0		GATE: NPSTRSG									
DIM/CRS: 0		RATE: 00		PORTAMENTO RATE: 00							
VIBRATO DELAY: 00		RATE: 07		SIZE: 06							
PWM DLY: 00		RATE: 40		LIMITS: UP: 01 LOW: 01							
FILTERS: 0 C OFF: 00		VOICE: 320		TYPE: HBL							
MOD DLY: 00		RATE: 00		RES: 0		FADE: N		DIR: 0			
LIM: UP: 00		LOW: 00		DIR: 1		RATE: 00		VOL: 0			



Ubik: tinkling the ivory chips.



a Pound

**64/128
Firebird
Price:
£1.99**

When *Microrhythm* became the utility to first crash its way in to the charts way back at the beginning of this year. It was hailed as the cheapest drum kit in the history of the universe. £1.99 for a whole bundle of different sampled percussion sounds was certainly not something to be sneered at. Amazingly, Firebird has enhanced the program fourfold, but retained the £1.99 price tag. Now renamed *Microrhythm +*, it features not just one set of sampled sounds, but four. Crammed onto both sides of the cassette, you can choose from

allows you to bash around on the keyboard, trying out each of the sampled sounds available. Because sampled sound consumes vast quantities of memory there are few variations, and depending on which section you have loaded, you will have between 12 and 20 or so different sounds to choose from. By far the most interesting is the *microvocal* set — modified human voice samples. When you get bored messing around with the keyboard you can move on to something more ambitious.

In bar write mode the individual

sounds can be put together and you can compose bars of music. Notes of varying pitch can be placed on the bar with spaces between them to denote rests. Once your bar is composed you can play it to see how it sounds and you can in fact place, remove and alter notes on the bar while it's playing (your timing has to be pretty good though). As well as altering the pitch of the notes you can introduce 'flam'. This makes the note double beat with a short delay in between which can be tampered with for some wild effects.

Having composed all of the bars

you need you can put them together in song write mode. Each bar is numbered and it's simply a case of typing in the bar numbers in the sequence you want them played. That's all there is to it. It's a simple program to use but a lot of fun. And if you play it through a hi-fi (via the audio video din socket at the back of the 64) it will not only sound ten times better, you can play a hundred times louder, ensuring maximum enjoyment for all the neighbours. If *Microrhythm* was a bargain that makes this version an absolute giveaway. Make sure you get a copy.

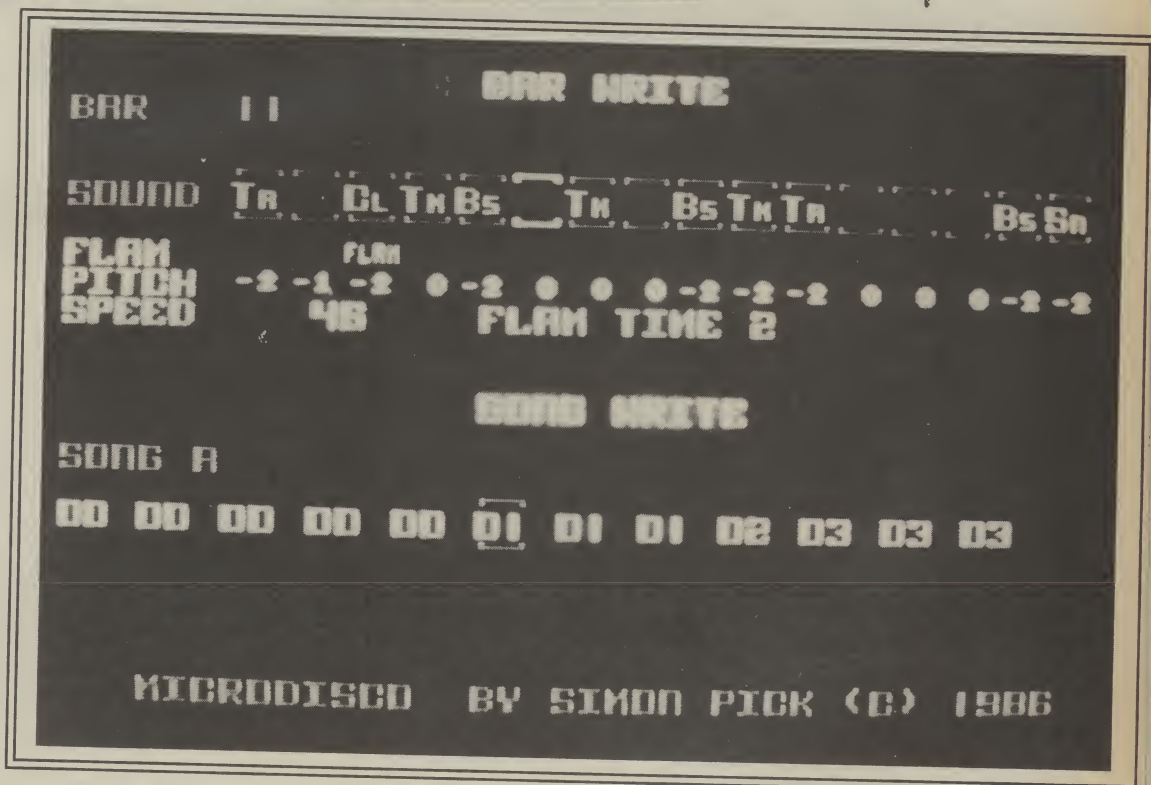
MICRORHYTHM



microlatin, microdisco, microvocal
an *microtune*.

The first two sets are probably the closest thing to the original *Microrhythm*'s set of sampled drum sounds and include bass, snare, handclap, crash and all the rest. *Microtune* includes some more melodic sounds in addition to the pure percussion stuff. But for sheer outright wackiness *microvocal* has to be heard to be believed. This section provides you with a selection of sampled voice sounds meddled with to such an extent it's almost hard to tell they ever belonged to a human being in the first place. They're weird, unnatural even. All four sets of sounds load as a separate program and each comes with some sample tunes composed presumably by the program's author, Simon Pick. You can play these tunes in their entirety, steal bars and incorporate them in your own compositions, take what's there and modify it, or start completely from scratch on a brand new beat.

As with its predecessor, *Microrhythm +* has three operating modes; song write, bar write and real time mode. The last of these



▲ **Microrhythm: Layin' down a byte.**



C64/128
Price:
£1.99 cass

Super Sprint? No. *Super Sprint* clone? Yes! From what I hear, this was based loosely around *BMX Simulator*, though it's nowhere near as good. In this case there are fourteen tracks, each one centred around the idea that driving under bridges is fun. Not very! For the best part you're clueless as to what's happening; whether you're stuck, whether there's an oil slick or some other difficulty.

Each course lasts for three laps or ninety-nine seconds, whichever comes first. *Super Sprint's* appeal was that you could wrap yourself around the steering wheel as you threw the car around bends. Sadly,



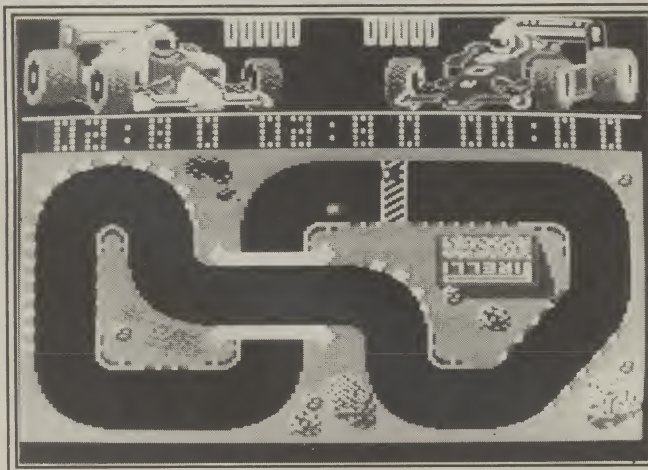
▲ Drive that shoebox, sucker!

GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR

most of the world's top software programmers do not realise that a five inch piece of plastic makes a bad steering wheel. So you end up getting cramp in your trigger finger which is using the fire button as an accelerator pedal, while the rest of the hand is bending the stick at alarming angles trying to rotate the car onto a half decent heading.

Speaking of cars, the one in *Grand Prix Simulator* looks more like a soap dish. In layman's terms, a block. Interesting huh? The tracks aren't exactly pretty to look at either, samey and bland. The only variation comes with the different track positions. What is pretty, though, are two neat cars which take up the top third of the screen, doing nothing other than looking, well, pretty.

If not a contender for biggest rip off of the year, *Grand Prix Simulator* has to take the title of most frustrating beat your head against an iron anvil award. The inertia effect is put to good use, but strategically placed gaps in the crash barriers mean that as you~



▲ Looks a bit familiar — doesn't play familiarly though.

come out of a death defying spin, you crash through the hole and into a stand of spectators. Here's the tricky bit: with no room to manoeuvre or accelerate and no way of going into reverse, how do you do a U-turn to get out again? A weeny bit tricky eh? The computer car doesn't seem to fare much better either. Sadly though, it still suffers from the syndrome that first appeared in *BMX Sim*, where you could easily say to yourself "I don't have to worry about being behind at this stage, the computer car crashes at the third bend and takes three seconds to get going again."

The sound is different, a strange technoramic noise blares, somewhere between an engine noise and a tune. The brake noises sound like a pig who has just discovered that it's destined to end its days on Bernard Matthew's plate. Supporting the sound FX is an

equally tacky display of digitised speech, the person whose voice was digitised would have no problem on an advert for Tunes or announcing the cancellations of trains. Both jobs require an inability to grasp the fundamentals of speaking through the mouth.

GPS is officially endorsed by Formula Three race driver Johnny Dumfries, who cannot possibly be doing his career much good by putting his name down for a game such as this.

At first sight worthy, but it's not until you have tried persevering with it for more than an hour and realising there is no way you're at fault with the game, that it becomes clear that it's the game itself which is so hideously frustrating. This is the sort of game I would only recommend to Yuppies who have lost their driving licenses and don't mind forking out for more than a day's entertainment, or who just can't wait for a regular fix of the genuine version of *Super Sprint*.

Mark Patterson

Graphics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sound	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Toughness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Endurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3
Overall

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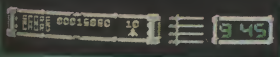
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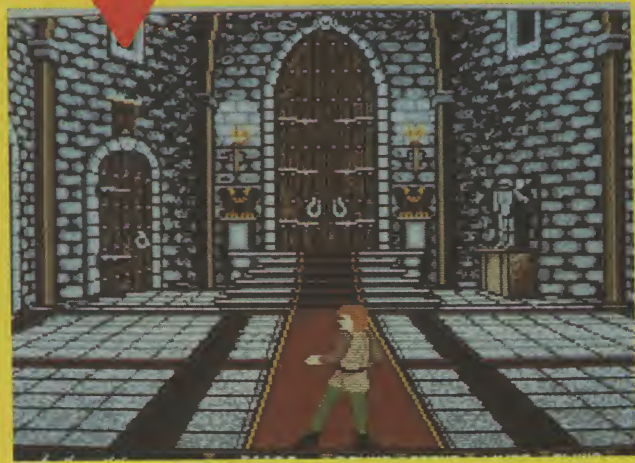
DARK



**Amiga
Mirrorsoft
Price:
£24.99**

**C.U.
Screen
Star***

CASTLE



**Choose a door to
start the game.**

very fast while wobbling your
jowels!

Some of the critters are really
lovely. The ravens for example,
when hit with a stone plummet
beak-first toward the ground, and
land with a digitised splat and a
mish-mash of feathers and bits of
flesh. Probably the cutest animals in
the game have these gigantic hands
and strut around making (digitised)
meep meep noises. In fact most of
the noises in the game are digitised,

little squeal then drops straight
down and lands with a dull thud on
the ground.

Whilst this is by no means the best
game ever released on the Amiga, it
is one of the funniest. It's a laugh to
play which is more than I can say for
most of the games that I've loaded
up lately.

My major gripe though is that it
uses the disgusting two disk system,
which is fine if you have a second
drive, but for poor mortals like me it
means a lot of fiddling around with
the disks when I would much rather
be playing the game. Nevertheless,
it is a well crucial game from
Mirrorsoft who prove once more
that they're supreme on the Amiga.

This is truly an excellent piece of
software, impeccable in every detail.
My money's on it to be a winner.

Mark Patterson



and good quality at that. Some
times the various noises generated
by the rats can get on your nerves
and can only be cured by a rock in
the foul creature's gob. One of the
nicest special effects in the game
has got to be when you clobber an
upside down hanging bat, it gives a

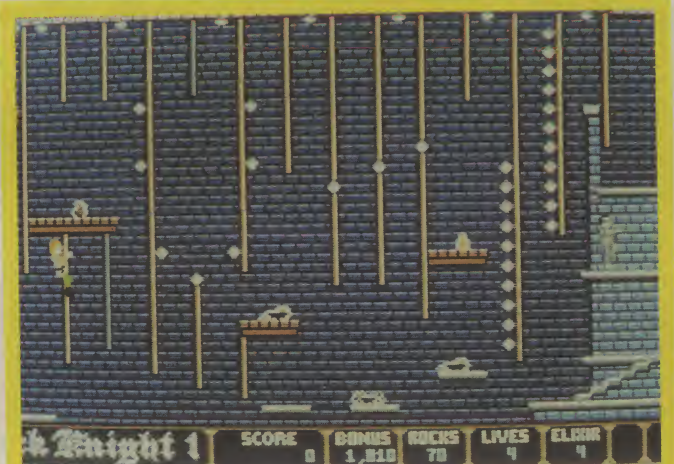


**Hunchback-rope
room.**

you have one of the guards
whipping the life out of three
unfortunates. Every time the whip
reaches its maximum extension you
get the familiar digitised crack and a
little flash-like star right at the end of
the whip. If you should just happen
to run the little hero off the edge of a
platform, in best cartoon tradition,
he'll give you a doleful look, his
head spins and he looks towards the

**Outside the castle
beset by bats.**

floor, shrugs his shoulders and
plummets to the flagstones below. If
you're lucky he'll get up again,
groan, shake his head a lot, and
makes that bluberbluberbluber
noise which can only be made by
shaking your head from side to side



Let me take you on a mystic
journey to a house on a hill in
a far away land. Not just any
sort of house, but a haunted house,
with fourteen rooms each one more
terrible than the previous, populated
by demonic monkeys, flying
dragons, rats, bats and kinky guards
who are into leather and whips. And
at the end? The Black Knight — to
overthrow him is your task.

All you have for your protection is
a handful of rocks (well hardly a
handful, more like sixty!) to fend off
anything that flies, crawls or slithers
into your way. If a lack of rocks you
should suffer, you could always
collect a bottle of elixir to ward off
rats and the bats. Later on in the
game such objects as weapons,
fireballs, maces and magic shields
can be found. The rooms suffer no
lack of variety. There are dungeons,
belfrys, towers, halls and a lot more I
can't yet reach.

The game is along the same lines
as *Dragon's Lair*, but about ten times
better. The graphics while not
amazing have some fantastic
effects, some very comical ones at
that. In the dungeons for example

**C.U.
Screen
Star***



Graphics	<div><div></div></div>									
Sound	<div><div></div></div>									
Toughness	<div><div></div></div>									
Endurance	<div><div></div></div>									
Value	N/A									

8
Overall